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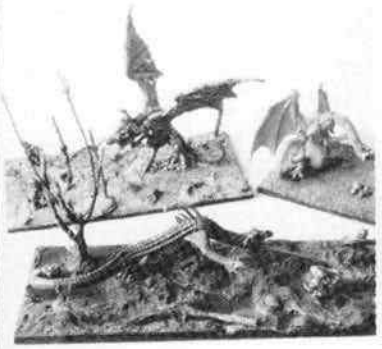

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PRICE INCREASE: Next issue, Adventurer goes up to 95p. Sorry folks.

Editorial

I recently read the most dismally boring editorial (no, it wasn't in Adventurer!), and it got me thinking, "What **should** an editorial be about?" Then I decided it should just be a meaningless piece of waffle to introduce the magazine. I know, I thought, I'll tell the readers about how boring an editorial **can** be...

From religion to spiders and insects this issue- I hope I'm not giving the game away, but if you've a phobia about arthropods, I'd leave this one well alone...

We have two fantasy scenarios to titilate your taste buds, and more supernatural horror from Mr. Lumley for your bedside enjoyment.

A wee peek at religious heresies to continue last issue's theme, and the controversial Women In Roleplaying and Voyages Beyond, both by our female correspondents.

Ste Dillon.

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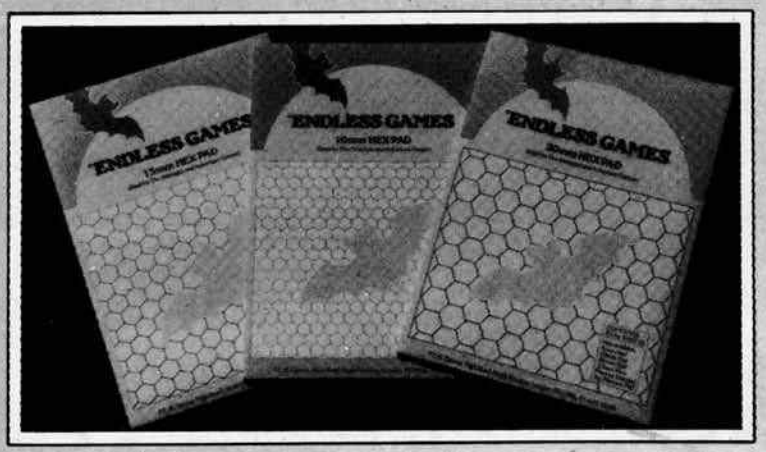

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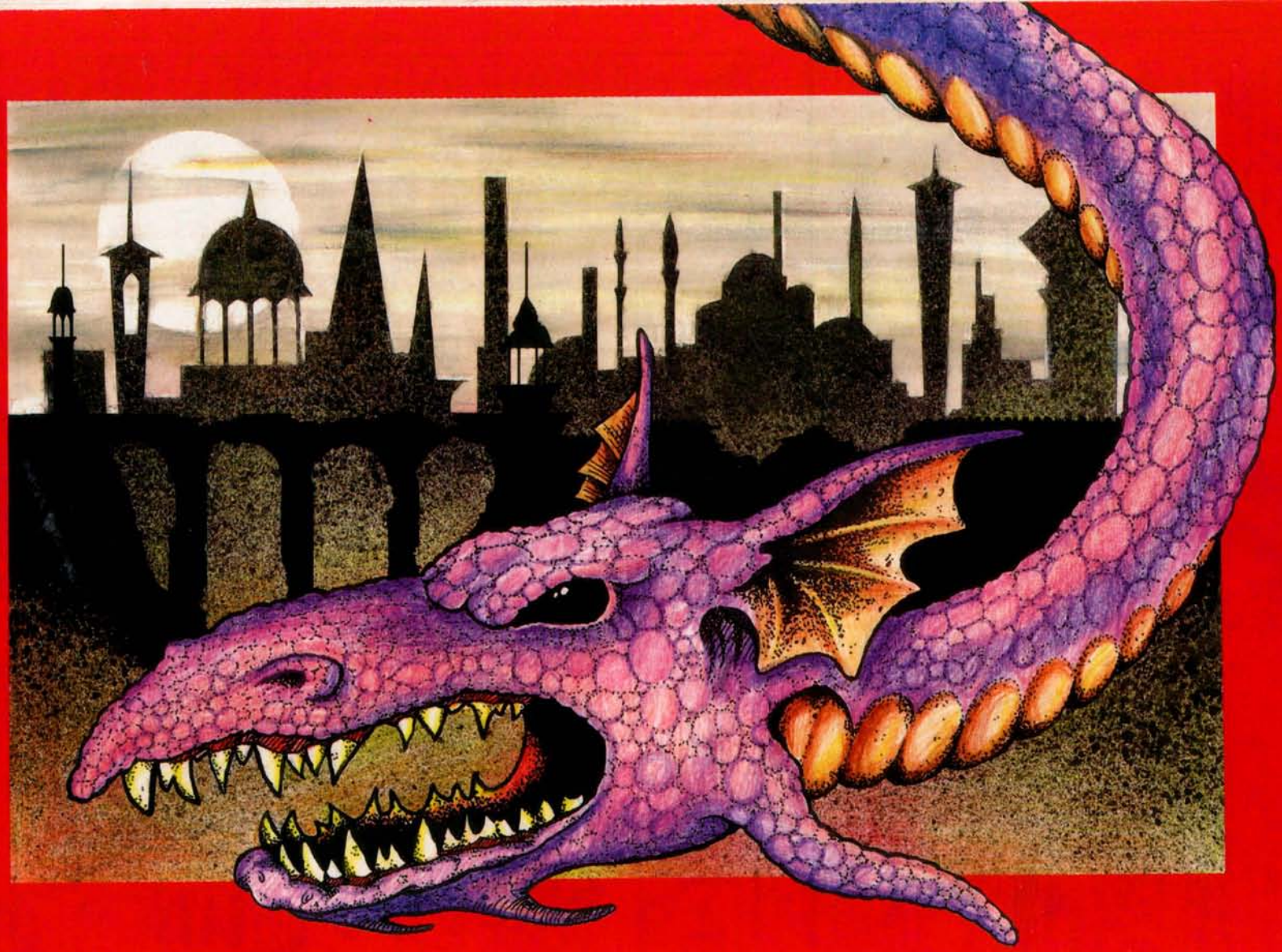

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Part III The Promised Land - Matriarchal Societies

By Janet Vialls

More Deadly than the Male

Introduction.

After looking last issue at female characters in conventional settings and at non-human women, this time I want to look at a few different sorts of societies, which could be used to add variety to a campaign world, as well as giving a few surprises, not to say shocks, for some of the more complacent players; three types of matriarchal society and the 'Utopia' of a society without gender bias. It is important to remember that there can be a large range of degree in patriarchal and matriarchal societies. In the extreme, one sex may be held in virtual servitude and regarded as **property** rather than as **people**, (eg. ancient **Sparta**), but less extreme societies are likely to be the more common. Often the dominant sex profess that their role is **protective** rather than **exploitative**, (an aspect of Chivalry), but **misogyny** (hatred of women), or the opposite may still play a part under the surface.

In order to introduce a non-standard society into a world, it is usually necessary to provide some way of isolating that society from the rest of the world. Fiction abounds with hidden valleys, mysterious or even floating or flying, islands, and the rest. Any of these would provide a suitable site. Often purely natural barriers will be perfectly adequate. Alternatively, what if the players were to discover that their own 'world' was just such an isolated society...? On the other hand, a matriarchal society may be strong enough to stand openly amongst the other nations, in which case its nature would be known in advance to outsiders. Of course, the reports are unlikely to be accurate... I always find feeding players false rumours (and having them believe them) one of the pleasures of refereeing.

I make no apology for the fact that these societies have few (but by no means no) historical precedents: I am not a simulationist gamer, but am interested in creating internally consistent, interesting backgrounds for rolegaming. History does provide a useful guide to basic human nature, and to what might 'work' as a society, but should not be followed slavishly. In a fantasy setting, magic and intelligent non-human races will both affect the nature of the society, opening up many new possibilities.

Another point to bear in mind is that no society should be totally 'one dimensional'. Any society should have quirks in its culture, unrelated to the main aspects that mark it out. These could include reverence for certain animals or plants, taboos over food or dress and the rest. Also, when playing characters born and bred in such societies, remember that they will find their society normal, and others defiant. As a referee, I usually find it helpful to spend some time 'thinking myself into a society' before I run it, so that I know how the people within it will respond.

1). The Role Reversal, or Amazon Society.

In this type of society, women take on all the traditionally 'male' roles, as soldiers, rulers and the rest, whilst the men adopt the 'female' roles of child care and home keeping. Men will be striving to attract women, looking for a protector and provider. They'll beautify themselves, and always expect women to take the lead in courtship. Women, on the other hand, adopt the 'mail traits' of agression and dominance. A whole society of Maggie Thatchers, in fact! (Of course, TOTAL role-reversal would only be possible if the men could actually bear the children. Since this would effectively turn them into women, it would simply result in the standard patriarchal society. A somewhat pointless exercise!)

On the other hand this is perhaps the most common type of matriarchal society in fiction and films, (especially pulp fiction) and is the easiest to play. It is also the least interesting, since it is essentially the same as the patriarchal society, except that the other half of the population is in charge. However, such a society can still give characters entering from other lands a surprise. You can also have a certain amount of fun by making male NPCs fit the standard female stereotypes, as well as vice versa. Characters from such a society are likely to be horrified at the surrounding societies. They may well despise the women for allowing their men to dominate them so.

2). The All Female Society.

This type of society has obvious problems, the principle one being reproduction. However, in a magic-rich world, it should not be beyond the wit of the GM to come up with a magical method of reproduction. Such a society will be very alien in feel. Think about how much of our society and culture is geared to attracting members of the opposite sex! What could take the place of this in such a society? Social contacts will be on some other basis than the need to meet the opposite sex. There may be greater creativity due to the loss of any direct means to procreate, so that art and literature flourish. Or perhaps society will fall back on complex rituals of etiquette, or on social games (role-playing, perhaps?!?). For that matter, perhaps the social structure will produce artificial divisions, so that social gatherings are designed to bring together Reds and Greens (or whatever), where the actual difference between the divisions is impossible for an outsider to determine.

Then there are many other things to consider. How is society organised? Are stable 'marriages' formed between women? Or is there some different social structure? Society could be totally communal, with everyone living in large hearths, or it could be totally individualistic, with all members of society living alone (this is less likely - everyone needs some human contact).

Are any members of the society, even if just the rulers, aware that men exist elsewhere? What is their attitude to men? Are they remembered with fondness or as monsters? Much will depend on the history of the society. If the men were wiped out in some disaster, then they might be remembered with fondness, or regarded as purely mythical. On the other hand, a society founded by women who rebelled against or fled from their men would be likely to have tales of men as evil monsters. Either way, the image they have of men is likely to be so distorted by time that they may not even recognise them if they meet them. In the first case they would be looking for angels, and in the second, demons. Few male adventurers would fit either. Also worth considering is the attitude of these women to women from the outside world. They might well react negatively if women are seen to be subservient to their menfolk. Careless actions might spark a crusade to liberate the women in the rest of the world...

Similarly, do the surrounding lands have rumours of the land 'In the Mountains', (or wherever)? How do the men in the surrounding lands regard these stories? The women might seem as inhuman and un-natural demons, or as a 'challenge' to their 'masculinity'. They might well seek to prevent their women learning these stories. How do the women react to the rumours? A possible series of encounters could involve a group of women seeking this supposed Utopia, whilst being pursued by their menfolk.

It is common in fiction and films for (mainly male) writers to assume that women in such society will automatically fall in love with the first men to enter their

land in 'n' hundred years. I'm sorry to disappoint all those male egos out there, but this is extremely unlikely, not to say illogical. To women who are used to seeing only other women, and who do not associate men with procreation, men would seem like members of a different species. They may be friendly or unfriendly, perhaps even 'cute' or interesting, but how many of us would fall in love with a Gorilla? An interesting, if somewhat controversial, fictional all female society is **'Whileaway'**, in Joanna Russ' **"The Female Man"**. 'Whileaway' certainly makes an interesting contrast to the paranoia of works like John Wyndham's **"Consider Her Ways"!**

The mirror image of this is, of course, the all male society. Here we are on firmer ground, as we have more material to draw on. Besides the various societies in the real world which virtually exclude women from participating in them, we have such institutions as public schools and (until recently) the armed forces. Such societies appear to be both highly hierarchical and competitive, and invariably emphasise military virtues. On the other hand, they could put great emphasis on honour and team-spirit, as well as self-reliance and achievement. For a truly nightmarish account of such a world, again see Joanna Russ' "The Female Man". It need not, though, necessarily be any more nightmarish than an all-female society, but the unpleasantness is likely to be of a different nature, perhaps in a lack of compassion or mutual support.

3). The Status Reversal Society.

This is perhaps the most confusing society for characters from a male-dominated one, simply because it may appear on the surface to be a totally conventional patriarchal society. Men are seen doing most of the heavy labouring work, they also seem to form the militia forces of the society. However, talking to members of this society can be a little disconcerting. The default pronoun is 'she' rather than 'he'; the heads of families are women, men frequently being referred simply as so-and-so's husband, a successful scheme or operation may be described as going from 'subtlety to subtlety', rather than 'strength to strength', and warriors command little or no respect. In contrast, men speak with respect (and sometimes a little envy) of the feminine skills of child rearing and house keeping. A few may seek to imitate female dress and mannerisms, and be regarded either as 'getting above themselves', or with a degree of tolerance. Gradually it is noticeable that all positions of authority are held by women.

To take an example from our own campaign, consider the island of Sohdhor, one of a small group of islands known as the Eastern Isles. Sohdhor was first settled when a group of women fled a long running war between two of the other islands. They were led by a great and wise sorceress, Anassa Sohdhora, and under her guidance the small group of women and children set up a society in hiding.

Anassa realised that her people needed power if they were to defend themselves once the neighbouring states stopped fighting each other. She therefore set about training her people in the arts of sorcery. Other women, and a few men (deserters from both sides), joined them, but men who wished to stay had to accept that the women would be in charge. For Anassa believed that the male virtues of physical courage and aggression and competition were responsible for the constant warfare in the region. She believed that a better society would be formed if feminine values were dominant in it, and she saw subtle magic, diplomacy and outright cunning as the keys to success.

When, many years later, the war finally ended, Sohdhor was already a growing community, with defences based on magic and diplomacy.

Now, some 200 years on, Sohdhor is a powerful force in the island group. It never gets involved in physical combat between the other islands, but her diplomats and spies are skilled at playing the islands off against each other, whilst the island itself remains at peace. The other islands know of the great magical power on the island and Sohdhor is keen to remind them of the danger should this fall into the hands of one of the other islands. This has led to the long-standing peace, which is seen by the island's inhabitants (of both sexes) as proof of the superiority of female rule. Why, let men get too much power, and they start fighting each other: Look at the other islands! Women, who are the bearers of the next generation, and have greater compassion and gentleness, are clearly better suited to run things than men. Giving birth to and bringing up children are clearly the most important functions in society, and the goddesses have given these roles to the most important sex. It is only right that those who care for the next generation should be the ones with the political power to decide what sort of world today's children will inhabit. Men are too ready to let their heads rule their hearts; they do not have the understanding of the natural world a woman has, for they do not listen to their emotions, only their minds.

Warriors, of all types, whether male or female, have low status in Sohdhorian life. It is a low status profession, suitable for men. No well born or civilised woman would want training in arms. Just as in feudal societies, young noblemen will gain training in arms, virtually all well born, and a good many not so well born young women on Sohdor have some training in magic. In these studies they learn the superiority of subtlety over strength, the well timed suggestion or illusion over the lightning bolt or fire ball, and how to turn the enemy's apparent strengths into weaknesses.

Throughout the islands there are rumours of the great power of the beautiful and deadly 'witches of Sohdhor'. Agents of Sohdhor on other islands are skilled at using male weaknesses against them. They are quite capable of using sexuality as a weapon. Many are trained courtesans or (in D&D terms) houris, and are the mistresses of powerful men on other islands.

Despite all this, however, the position of men is better than that of women in some male dominated societies: they may own land, and a few even study the magical arts, if they can pass certain tests set by the Guild leaders. However, crimes against women, such as rape, carry the most severe penalties. Violence of all kinds, no matter how noble or 'justified' is despised as the 'last refuge of the incompetent': the fact that it still occurs occassionally is a sign of how far their society still falls short of the ideal.

A society such as Sohdhor has many possibilities for scenarios. For players who role play well and are prepared to talk to NPCs, setting a comparitively straightforward search or mystery type scenario within such a society should provide an interesting role-playing experience, with plenty of opportunities for mis-understandings and social gaffes. Alternatively, the party could find themselves being used in a Sohdhorian sponsored scheme on some other island. Try to avoid using this society purely as a source of villains: there is much that is good in Sohdhorian life. Individuals within the society will be as varied as from any other society. For example, a man from Sohdhor might be horrified by the levels of violence common in many standard fantasy societies, and thus become a fanatical advocate of female rule!

4). The Unbiased Society.

This is, perhaps, the most difficult society to set up. It is basically one in which everyone is treated on their merits, whether they are male or female. In a totally unbiased society, for instance, inheritance (including titles and position) will be via the eldest child of either sex, or will otherwise treat the sexes equally. However, such a society need not mean that there are no differences between men and women: rather it would recognise and value equally the special qualities of both. Women could still be feminine

(although not automatically submissive) whilst men could still be masculine (although not automatically dominant). Similarly, such a society would not have preconceived ideas about what roles were suitable for men and women, the effeminate man and the masculine woman would both find it easier to be accepted in such a society. The best fictional example of such a society that I know of is the world of Vonda McIntyre's "Dreamsnake", where equality is a product of the fact that both sexes have total control of their own fertility.

As with any Utopia, the scenario possibilities arising directly from this aspect of such a society are somewhat limited. A Utopia is a lovely place to live, but would be extremely dull in game terms. (Of course, other aspects of the society need not be so perfect). A party could be involved in protecting it from an outside threat or the like, but the main use in gaming terms is probably to provide a safe haven or an interesting background for characters.

Bibliography.

A number of books touch on this subject. Below are just a few that are worth looking at.

Andre Norton's 'Witch World' books are probably the best known 'status reversal' society in fiction.

Vonda McIntyre is a good writer for unbiased societies. 'Dreamsnake', is really Science Fantasy, but has a very 'Fantasy Feel'. Also, her contribution to the 'Thieves World' set, 'Looking for Satan', ('Shadows of Sanctuary'; Penguin), is an excellent description of the responses of people from an unbiased society to a standard low fantasy one, (and vice versa).

All female societies: Firstly two dreadful ones, prime examples of how not to do it. Paul Anderson's 'Virgin Planet', a mixture of male sexual ego-tripping and paranoia, and John Wyndham's 'Consider Her Ways' (Penguin), purely male paranoia. One that I find more interesting, although certainly controversial, is Joanna Russ's 'The Female Man' (Women's Press). Not an easy read, but well worth the effort. The descriptions of 'Whileaway' evoke a fascinating society. The descriptions of 'Manland' and 'Womanland' are both equally nightmarish. Buy is for the man in your life!

Finally, two books which certainly relate to the subject, although I'll leave it to the reader to make what they can of them. Firstly, Ursula Le Guin's 'Left Hand of Darkness' (Orbit Books), set on a world of one sex, neither male or female, but both. This is science fiction rather than fantasy, but gives two fascinating, multi-dimensional societies in some detail. The second is James Tiptree's 'Up the Walls of the World' (published by Pan). As well as being a superb science fiction novel, it includes a society where the men are responsible for child-rearing, yet which is still patriarchal.

I'm afraid all the books I've been positive about were written by women (James Tiptree is a pseudonym for a woman writer). I've probably missed some good examples by male writers, but I know of none. Perhaps some writers could accept the challenge...

BEYOND VOYAGES

In reply to Wendy Graham's comments in Adventurer #6, and to let you know how biased I am, my mention of **Harlan Ellison** was the result of pure partisanship; I happen to believe that Mr Ellison was seriously slighted bt TV; he spent six months watching his dream turn into a nightmare at the hands of a Canadian production company, and as one of the great contemporary SF writers, deserves as much exposure for his other TV work as possible, if only as recompense for this. He did, after all, write the 'finest Star Trek episode ever made'.

I wasn't attacking bias in **Voyages Beyond** in general, the trouble is that Wendy's column was actually biased against SF. If VB is an American Tourist's whistle-stop, then the tour guide missed the Acropolis, St. Pauls, and the Louvre, spending all her time in buses and hotel lobbies instead.

Assuming that the column was aimed at 'the man on the Clapham omnibus', devoting almost half of it to TV was absurd, he's already going to be familiar with TV SF, and anyway, television represents the lowest common denominator of the genre. The people responsible for commissioning TV programmes see SF as light (juvenile) drama involving actors in shiny suits being chased around by people in rubber alien costumes.

You can get a pretty good idea of how TV abuses SF from the experiences of Harlan Ellison, who was approached ("We want the top SF writer in the world") to write an SF TV series.

He was no stranger to the medium (having worked on Star Trek, The Outer Limits, The Man From U.N.C.L.E. and a couple of other US series) and realising that the producers wanted a pretty **basic** SF plot, suggested an old standard:

After several centuries of travel, the crew of a generation starship go into a bit of a decline and end up forgetting that they are in a ship at all. The ship is going to crash into a star. One 'crew member' discovers the awful truth, gets chased around a bit, and finally saves everyone.

Ellison called it **The Starlost.** The TV producer was stunned; no funny rubber suits, no space rays, this was obviously the greatest work of original genius since Leonardo invented the helicopter. Harlan had his own TV series.

After the ubiquitous delays and a myriad of personnel changes, Starlost went into production. By the time it reached the small screen, there so little left of his creation (even the pilot episode title had been changed from 'Phoenix without Ashes' to the dazzlingly unoriginal 'Voyages of Discovery') that Ellison refused to allow his name to be used in the credits; to protect his royalties he insisted they use the pseudonym **'Cordwainer Bird'** instead.

Starlost was an unmitigated disaster, but some indication of what it might have been can be drawn from the fact that Ellison's original script (not the defaced version that was finally filmed) won the *Writers Guild of America Award* for the Most Outstanding Film/TV screenplay of 1974. Accepting the award, Harlan offered the advice *"If the ******s want to rewrite you... hit'em!"*

Starlost was an extreme example of the relationship between TV and SF, but the same bias towards the least innovative, most mediocre, exists in almost all TV treatments of the genre. Quite honestly, in a 3000 word history, TV SF doesn't warrant mention.

SF fares rather better at the cinema and some excellent SF films turn up (*Dark Star, Static, A Clockwork Orange*, etc.), but are usually overshadowed by the much less interesting 'blockbusters'. The trouble with a blockbuster is that it costs so much to make, it simply can't afford to fail. In order to 'assume' success, all the tired old cliches that are assumed to guarantee 'bums on seats' are rolled out.

Ridley Scott's 'Blade Runner' is generally agreed to be one of the better big budget SF movies (I've even seen it described as a flawless masterpiece!) and is ostensibly based on **Philip Dick's** novel **"Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep"**. If you actually read the book, you'll discover that part of the film's plot belongs to a completely different story (Dick's **"We can build you"**), and the whole concoction has been beaten into the mould of a sub-Chandleresque detective story. All that really remains of the original is Dick's decaying San Francisco, brilliantly realised by concept artist Syd Mead. It's not that "Do Androids Dream" wouldn't have made a perfectly good movie as it was, just that it doesn't mirror the Hollywood stereotype of SF.

No 'explanation' of SF would be complete without some mention of cinema, but with very limited space, it's sufficient to simply list a representative film from each of the last few years (Let's say, "Invasion of the Body-snatchers" for the '50s, "Star Wars" for the '70s), most of Adventurer's readers have almost certainly seen them anyway.

Literature is by far the most important SF media, and the most difficult to define. With a 3000 word limit, you might just manage a list of notable SF writers and their key books. The subject is simply too broad for any short analysis to be worthwhile. Even at nearly 300,000 words, **Trillion Year Spree, Brian Aldiss's** history of SF only devotes a few lines to several important authors. In short, I think Wendy's brief was at fault; the task set was practically impossible.

Unfortunately, **Voyages Beyond** hasn't really improved since issue #3; it seems to be an unholy alliance of 'society' and Star Trek columns, with book reviews running a very poor third. The 'society' bit surely belongs in **Town Crier**, and if you really want a **Trekie** column, why not call it that and be done with it? Adventurer deserves a decent book review spot, and on that front, at least V.B. in #6 is far better than any previous, but the rest of the column is still a bit of a non-entity.

Just to fan the flames, I'll sign off with two more definitions of SF, **Brian Aldiss's** much quoted conversation starter "Hubris clobbered by nemesis" (the conversations usually start 'Where the hell is the dictionary?') and **Frederik Pohl's** unimpeachable conversation stopper "It's that thing that people who understand science fiction point to, when they point to something and say That's Science Fiction!"

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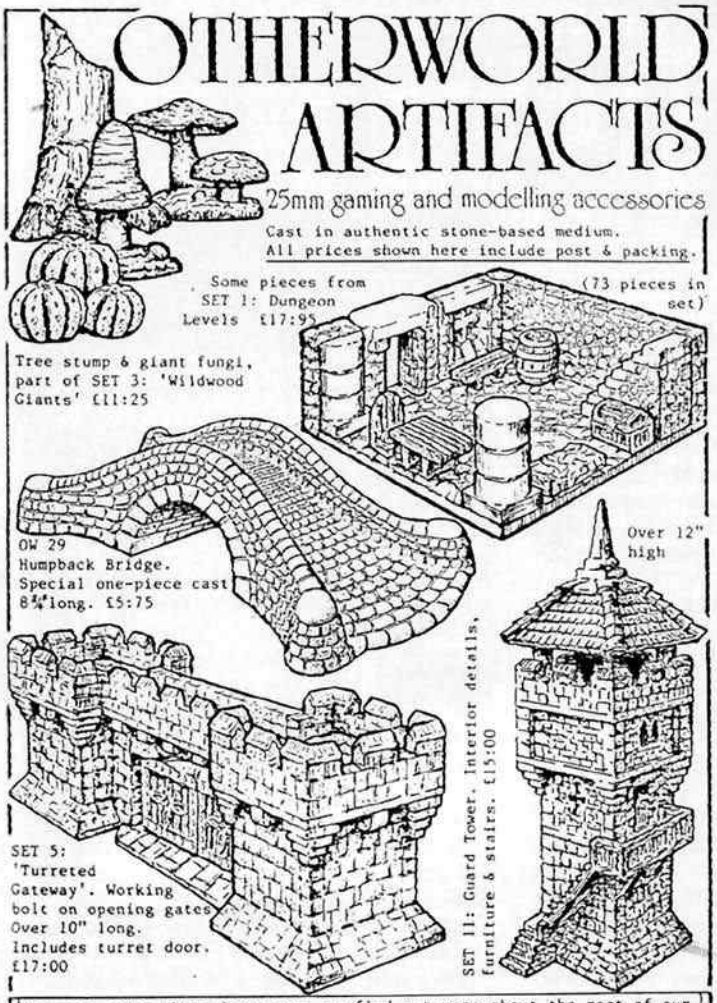
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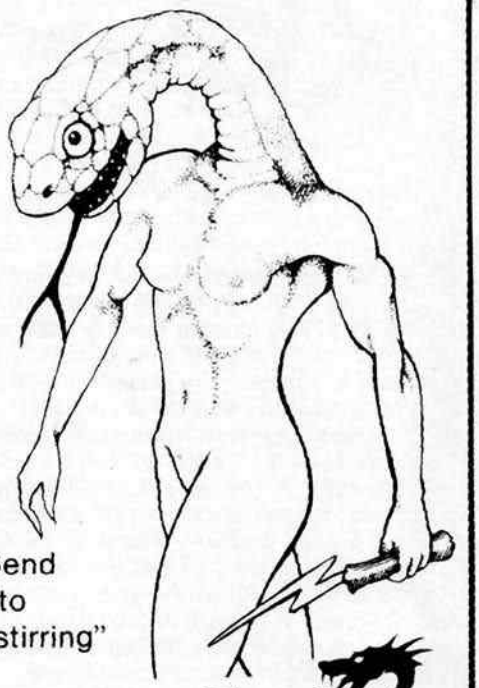

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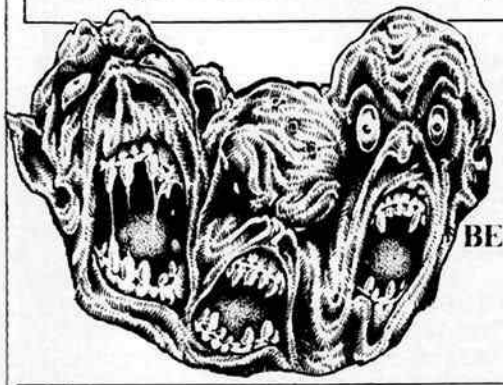

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RECOGNITION

BY BRIAN LUMLEY

I

'As to why I asked you all to join me here, and why I'm making it worth your while by paying each of you five hundred pounds for your time and trouble, the answer is simple. The place appears to be haunted, and I want rid of the ghost.'

The speaker was young, his voice cultured, his features fine and aristocratic. He was **Lord David Marriot**, and the place of which he spoke was a Marriot property: a large ungainly, mongrel achitecture of dim and doubtful origins, standing gaunt and gloomily atmospheric in an acre of brooding oaks. The wood itself stood central in nine acres of otherwise barren moors borderland.

Lord Marriot's audience numbered four: the sprightly octogenarian **Lawrence Danford**, a retired man of the cloth; by contrast the so-called 'mediums' **Jonathan Turnbull** and **Jason Lavery**, each a 'specialist' in his own right; and myself, an old friend of the family whose name does not really matter since I had no special part to play. I was simply there as an observer - an adviser, if you like - in a matter for which, from the beginning, I had no great liking.

Waiting on the arrival of the others, I had been with David Marriot at the old house all afternoon. I had long known something of the history of the place... and a little of its legend. There I now sat, comfortable and warm as our host addressed the other three, with an excellent sherry in my hand while logs crackled away in the massive fireplace. And yet suddenly, as he spoke, I felt chill and uneasy.

'You two gentlemen,' David smiled at the mediums, 'will employ your special talents to discover and define the malignancy, if indeed such an element exists; and you sir,' he spoke to the elderly cleric, 'will attempt to exorcise the unhappy - creature? - once we know who or what it is.' Attracted by my involuntary agitation, frowning, he paused and turned to me. 'Is something troubling you, my friend...?'

'I'm sorry to have to stop you almost before you've started, David,' I apologised, 'but I've given it some thought and - well, this plan of yours worries me.'

Lord Marriot's guests looked at me in some surprise, seeming to notice me for the first time, although of course we had been introduced; for after all they were the experts while I was merely an observer. Nevertheless, and while I was never endowed with any special psychic talent that I know of (and while certainly, if ever I had been, I never would have dabbled), I did know a little of my subject and had always been interested in such things.

And who knows? - perhaps I do have some sort of sixth sense, for as I have said I was suddenly and quite inexplicably chill with a sensation of foreboding that I knew had nothing at all to do with the temperature of the library. The others, for all their much-vaunted special talents, apparently felt nothing.

'My plan worries you?' Lord Marriot finally repeated. 'You didn't mention this before.'

'I didn't know before just how you meant to go about it. Oh, I agree that the house requires some sort of exorcism, that something is quite definitely wrong with the place, but I'm not at all sure that you should concern yourself with finding out *exactly* what it is you're exorcising.'

'Hmm, yes, I think I might agree,' Old Danford nodded his grey head. 'Surely the essence of the, *harumph*, matter, is to be rid of the thing - whatever it is. Er, not,' he hastily added, 'that I would want to do these two gentlemen out of a job - however much I disagree with, *harumph*, spiritualism and its trappings.' He turned to Turnbull and Lavery.

'Not at all, sir,' Lavery assured him, smiling thinly. 'We've been paid in advance, as you yourself have been paid, regardless of the results. We will therefore - *perform* - as Lord Marriot sees fit. We are not, however, spiritualists. But in any case, should our services no longer be required -' He shrugged.

'No, no question of that,' the owner of the house spoke up at once. 'The advice of my good friend here has been greatly valued by my family for many years, in all manner of problems, but he would be the first to admit that he's no expert in matters such as these. I, however, am even less of an authority, and my time is extremely short; I never have enough time for anything! That is why I commissioned him to find out all he could about the history of the house, in order to be able to offer you gentlemen something of an insight into its background.

'And I assure you that it's not just idle curiosity that prompts me to seek out the source of the trouble here. I wish to dispose of the property, and prospective buyers just will not stay in it long enough to appreciate its many good features! And so if we are to lay something to rest here, something which ought perhaps to have been laid to rest long ago, then I want to know what it is. Damn me, the thing's caused me enough trouble!

'So let's please have no more talk about likes and dislikes or what should or should not be done. It will be the way I've planned it.' He turned again to me. 'Now if you'll be so good as to simply outline the results of your research...?'

'Very well,' I shrugged in acquiescence. 'As long as I've made my feelings in the matter plain...' Knowing David the way I did, further argument would be quite fruitless; his mind was made up. I riffled through the notes lying in my lap, took a long pull on my pipe, and commenced:

'Oddly enough, the house as it now stands is comparatively modern, no more than two hundred and fifty years old; but it was built upon the shell of a far older structure, one whose origin is extremely difficult to trace. There are local legends, however, and there have always been chronicles of tales of strange old houses. The original house is given brief mention in texts dating back almost to Roman times, but the actual site had known habitation - possibly a druidic order or some such - much earlier. Later it bacame part of some sort of fortification, perhaps a small castle, and the remnants of earthworks in the shape of mounds, banks, and ditches can be found even today in the surrounding countryside.

'Of course the present house, while large enough by modern standards, is small in comparison with the original; it's a mere wing of the old structure. An extensive cellar - a veritable maze of tunnels, rooms, and passages - was discovered during renovation some eighty years ago, when first the Marriots acquired the property, and then several clues were disclosed as to its earlier use.

'This wing would seem to have been a place of worship, of sorts, for there was a crude altar-stone, a pair of ugly, font-like basins, a number of particularly repugnant carvings of gargoyles or 'gods', and other extremely ancient tools and bric-a-brac. Most of this incunabula was given into the care of the then curator

of the antiquities section of the British Museum, but the carved figures were defaced and destroyed. The records do not say why...

'But let's go back to the reign of James the First.

'Then the place was the seat of a family of supposed nobility, though the line must have suffered a serious decline during the early years of the seventeenth century - or perhaps fallen foul of the authorities or the monarch himself - for its name simply cannot be discovered. It would seem that for some reason, most probably serious dishonor, the family name has been erased from all contemporary records and documents!

'Prior to the fire which razed the main building to the ground in 1618, there had been a certain intercourse and intrigue of a similarly undiscovered nature between the nameless inhabitants, the *de la Poers* of Exham Priory near Anchester, and an obscure esoteric sect of monks dwelling in and around the semi-ruined Falstone Castle in Northumberland. Of the latter sect; They were wiped out utterly by Northern raiders - a clan believed to have been outraged by the 'Heathen activities' of the monks - and the ruins of the castle were pulled to pieces, stone by stone. Indeed, it was so well destroyed that today only a handful of historians could ever show you where it stood!

'As for the de la Poers: well, whole cycles of ill-omened myth and legend revolve around that family, just as they do about their Anchester seat. Suffice it to say that in 1923 the Priory was blown up and the cliffs beneath it dynamited, until the deepest roots of its foundations were obliterated. Thus the Priory is no more, and the last of that line of the family is safely locked away in a refuge for the hopelessly insane.

'It can be seen then that the nameless family that lived here had the worst possible connections, at least by the standards of those days, and it is improbable that they brought about their own decline and disappearance through just such traffic with degenerate or ill-advised cultists and demonologists as I have mentioned.

'Now then, add to all of this somewhat tenuously connected information the local rumours, which have circulated on and off in the villages of this area for some three hundred years - those mainly unspecified fears and old wives' tales that have sufficed since time immemorial to keep children and adults alike away from this property, off the land and out of the woods - and you begin to understand something of the aura of the place. Perhaps you can feel the aura even now? I certainly can, and I'm by no means psychic...'

'Just what is it that the locals fear?' Turnbull asked. 'Can't you enlighten us at all?'

'Oh, strange shapes have been seen on the paths and roads; luminous nets have appeared strung between trees like great webs, only to vanish in daylight; and, yes, in connection with the latter, perhaps I had better mention the bas-reliefs in the cellar.'

'Bas-reliefs?' queried Lavery.

'Yes, on the walls. It was writing of sorts, but in a language no one could understand - glyphs almost.'

'My great-grandfather had just bought the house,' David Marriot explained. 'He was an extremely well read man, knowledgeable in all sorts of peculiar subjects. When the cellar was opened and he saw the glyphs, he said they had to do with the worship of some strange deity from an obscure and almost unrecognized myth cycle. Afterwards he had the greater area of the cellar cemented in - said it made the house damp and the foundations unsafe.'

'Worship of some strange deity?' Old Danford spoke up. 'What sort of deity? Some lustful thing that the Romans brought with them d'you think?'

'No older than that,' I answered for Lord Marriot. 'Much older. A spider-thing.'

'A spider?' This was Lavery again, he snorted the words out almost in contempt.

'Not quite the thing to sneer at,' I answered. 'Three years ago an aging but still active gentleman rented the house for a period of some six weeks. An anthropologist and the author of several books, he wanted the place for its solitude; and if he took to it he was going to buy it. In the fifth week he was taken away raving mad!'

'Eh? Harumph! Mad, you say?' Old danford repeated me. I nodded. 'Yes, quite insane. He lived barely six months, all the while raving about a creature named *Atlach-Nacha* - a spider-god from the *Cthulhu* Cycle of myth - whose ghostly avatar, he claimed, still inhabited the house and its grounds.'

At this Turnbull spoke up. 'Now really!' he spluttered. 'I honestly fear that we're rapidly going from the sublime to the ridiculous!'

'Gentlemen, please!' There was exasperation now in Lord Marriot's voice. 'What does it matter? You know as much now as there is to know of the history of the troubles here - more than enough to do what you've been paid to do. Now then, Lawrence -' He turned to Danford. 'Have you any objections?'

'Harumph! Well, if there's a demon here - that is, something other than a creature of the Lord - then of course I'll do my best to help you . Harumph! Certainly.'

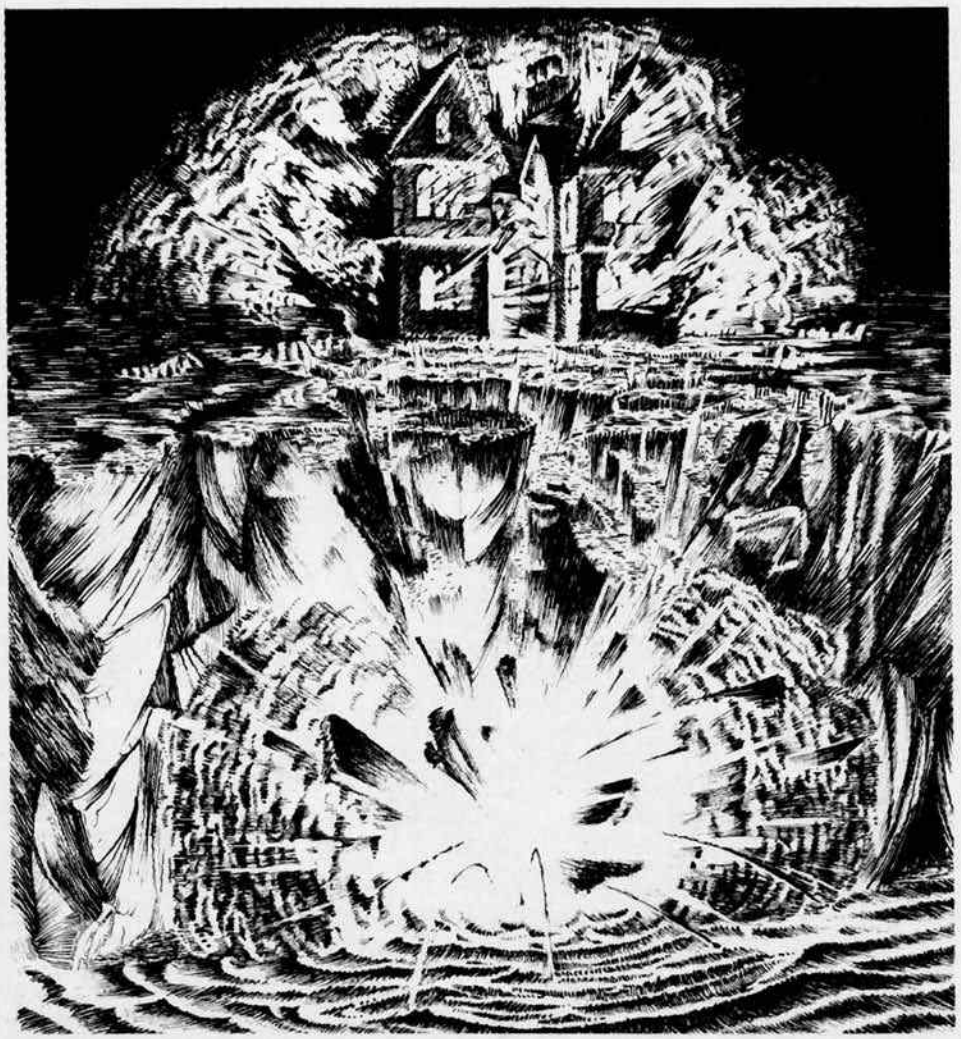
'And you, Lavery?'

'Objections? No, a bargain is a bargain. I have your money, and you shall have your noises.'

Lord-Marriot nodded, understanding Lavery's meaning. For the medium's talent was a supposed or alleged ability to speak in the tongue of the ghost, or the possessing spirit. In the event of a non-human ghost, however, then his mouthings might well be other than speech as we understand the spoken word. They might simply be - noises.

'And that leaves you, Turnbull.'

'Do not concern yourself, Lord Marriot,' Turnbull answered, flicking imagined dust from his sleeves. 'I, too, would be loath to break an honourable agreement. I have promised to do an automatic sketch of the



intruder, an art in which I'm well practised, and if all goes well I shall do just that. Frankly, I see nothing at all to be afraid of. Indeed, I would appreciate some sort of explanation from our friend here - who seems to me simply to be doing his best to frighten us off.' He inclined his head inquiringly in my direction.

I held up my hands and shook my head. 'Gentlemen, my only desire is to make you aware of this feeling of mine of... yes, premonition! The very air seems to be imbued with an aura of -' I frowned. 'Perhaps *disaster* would be too strong a word.'

'Disaster?' Old Danford, as was his wont, repeated me. 'How do you mean?'

'I honestly don't know. It's a feeling, that's all, and it hinges upon this desire of Lord Marriot's to know his foe, to identify the nature of the evil here. Yes, upon that, and upon the complicity of the rest of you.'

'But-' the young Lord began, anger starting to make itself apparent in his voice.

'At least hear me out,' I protested. 'Then -' I paused and shrugged. 'Then... you must do as you see fit.'

'It can do no harm to listen to him,' Old Danford pleaded my case. 'I for one find all of this extremely interesting. I would like to hear his argument.' The others nodded slowly, one by one, in somewhat uncertain agreement.

'Very well,' Lord Marriot sighed heavily.

'Just what is it that bothers you so much my friend?'

'Recognition,' I answered at once. 'To recognise our - opponent? - that's where the danger lies. And yet here's Lavery, all willing and eager to speak in the thing's voice, which can only add to our knowledge of it; and Turnbull, happy to fall into a trance at the drop of a hat and sketch the thing, so that we may all know exactly what it looks like. And what comes after that? Don't you see? The more we learn of it, the more it learns of us!

'Right now, this *thing* - ghost, demon, 'god,' apparition whatever you want to call it - lies in some deathless limbo, extradimensional, manifesting itself rarely, incompletely in our world. But to ***know*** the thing, as our lunatic anthropologist came to know it and as the superstitious villagers of these parts think they know it - that is to draw it from its own nighted place into this sphere of existence. That is to give it substance, to participate in its materialization!'

'Hah!' Turnbull snorted. 'And you talk of superstitious villagers! Let's have one thing straight before we go any further. Lavery and I do not believe in the supernatural, not as the misinformed majority understand it. We believe that there are other planes of existence, yes, and that they are inhabited; and further that occasionally we may glimpse alien areas and realms beyond the ones we were born to. In this we are surely nothing less than scientists, men who have been given rare talents, and each experiment we take part in leads us a little further along the paths of discovery. No ghosts or demons, sir, but scientific phenomena which may one day open up into whole new vistas of knowledge. Let me repeat once more; there is nothing to fear in this, nothing at all!'

'There I cannot agree,' I answered. 'You must be aware, as I am, that there are well documented cases of...'

'Self-hypnotism!' Lavery broke in. 'In almost every case where medium experimenters have come to harm, it can be proved that they were the victims of self-hypnosis.'

'And that's not all,' Turnbull added. 'You'll find that they were all believers in the so-called supernatural. We, on the other hand, are not...'

'But what of these well-documented cases you mentioned?' Old Danford spoke up. 'What sort of cases?'

'Cases of sudden, violent death!' I answered. 'The case of the medium who slept in a room once occupied by a murderer, a strangler, and who was found the next morning strangled - though the room was windowless and locked from the inside! The case of the exorcist,' (I paused briefly to glance at Danford), 'who attempted to seek out and put to rest a certain grey thing which haunted a Scottish graveyard. Whatever it was, this monster was legended to crush its victims' heads. Well, his curiosity did for him; He was found with his head squashed flat and his brains all burst from his ears!'

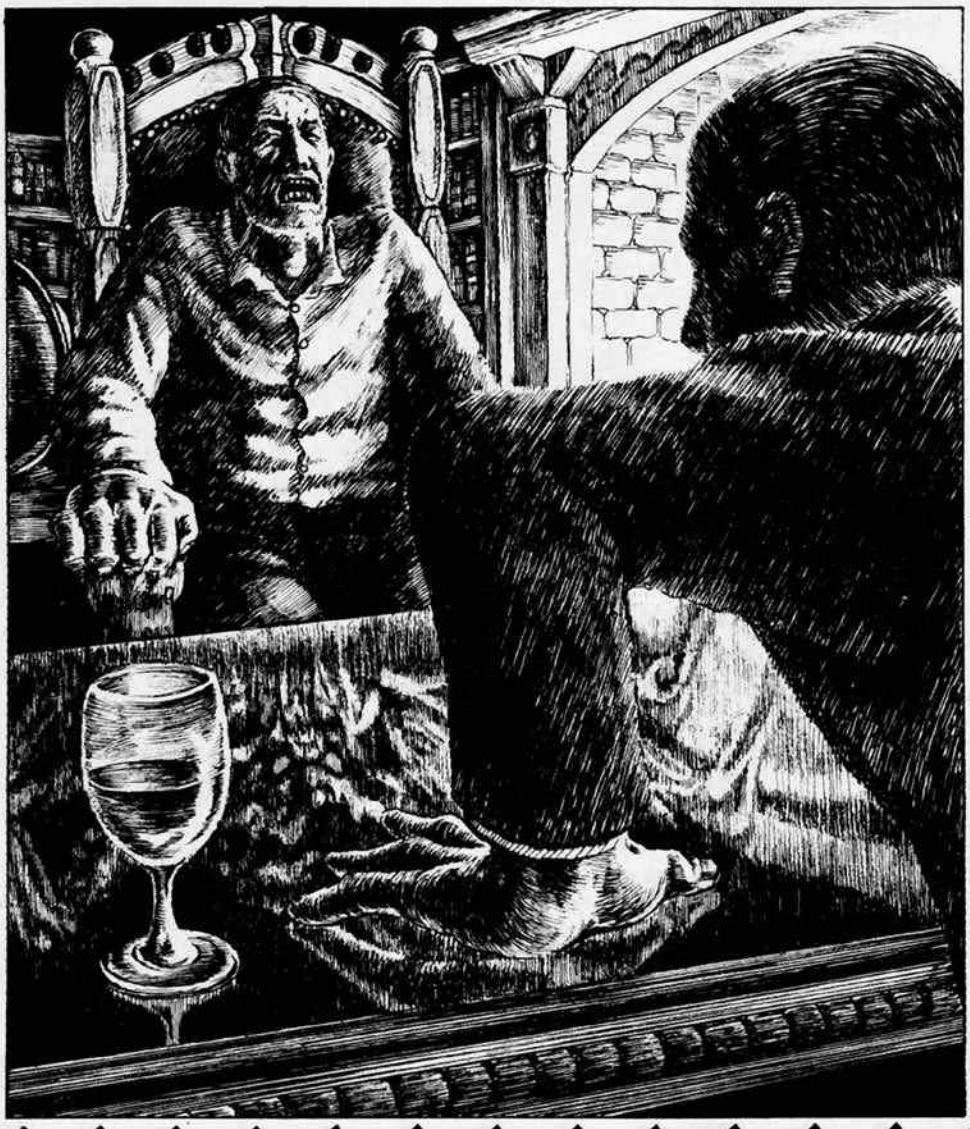
'And you think that all of -' Danford began. 'I don't know what to think,' I interrupted him, 'but certainly the facts seem to speak for themselves. These men I've mentioned, and many others like them, all tried to understand or search for things which they should have left utterly alone. Then, too late, each of them recognized... something... and it recognized them! What I **think** really does not matter; what matters is that these men are no more. And yet here, tonight, you would commence just such an experiment, to seek out something you really aren't meant to know. Well, good luck to you. I for one want no part of it. I'll leave before you begin.'

At that Lord Marriot, solicitous now, came over and laid a hand on my arm. 'Now you promised me you'd see this thing through with me.'

'I did not accept your money, David,' I reminded him.

'I respect you all the more for that,' he answered. 'You were willing to be here simply as a friend. As for this change of heart... At least stay a while and see the thing underway.' I sighed and reluctantly nodded. Our friendship was a bond sealed long ago, in childhood. 'As you wish - but if and when I've had enough then you must not try to prevent my leaving.'

'My word on it,' he immediately replied, briskly pumping my hand. 'Now then: a bite to eat and a drink, I think, another log on the fire, and then we can begin...'



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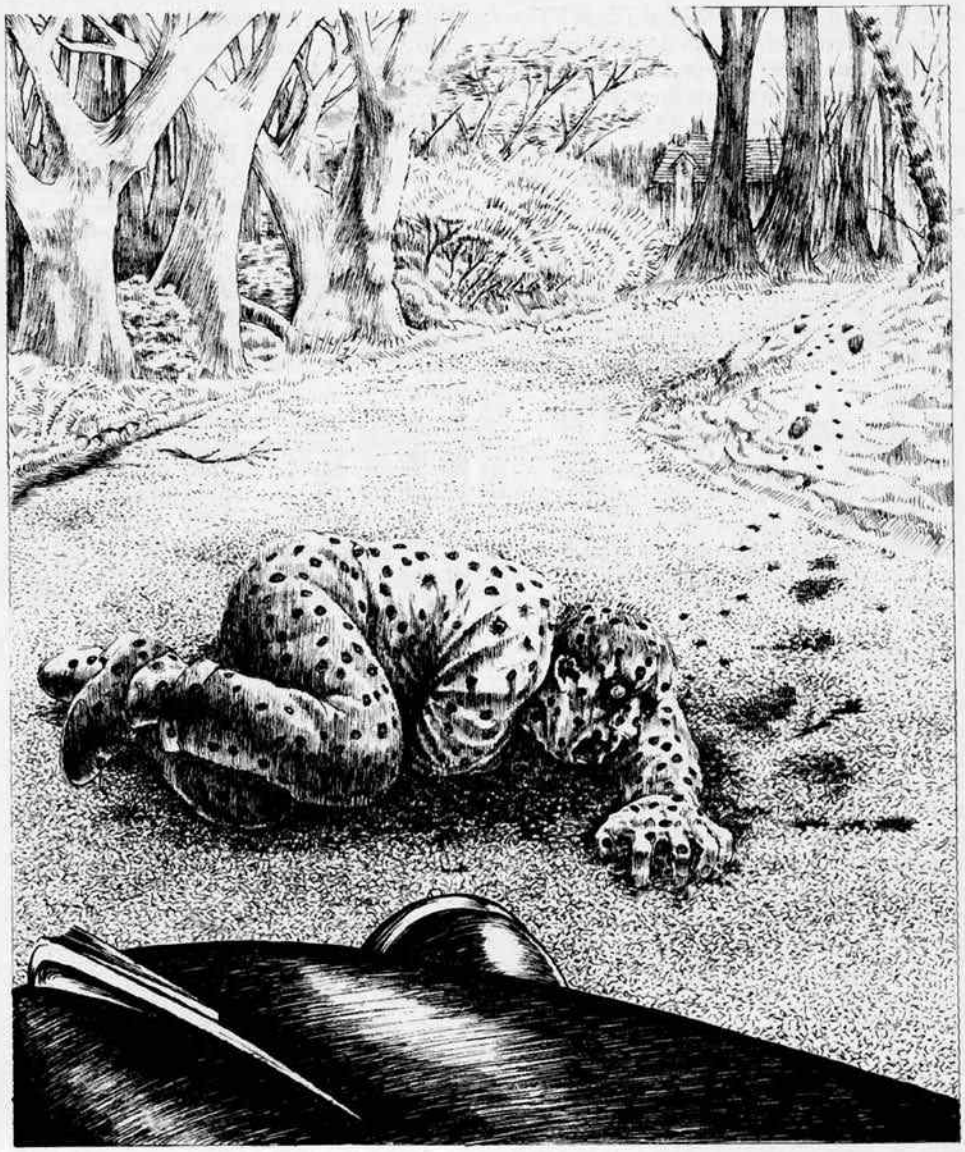

The late autumn evening was settling in fast by the time we gathered around a heavy, circular oak table set centrally upon the library's parquet flooring, in preparation for Lavery's demonstration of his esoteric talent. The other three guests were fairly cheery, perhaps a little excited - doubtless as a result of David's plying them unstintingly with his excellent sherry - and our host himself seemed in very good spirits; but I had been little affected and the small amount of wine I had taken had, if anything, only seemed to heighten the almost tangible atmosphere of dread which pressed in upon me from all sides. Only that promise wrested from me by my friend kept me there; and by it alone I felt bound to participate, at least initially, in what was to come.

Finally Lavery declared himself ready to begin and asked us all to remain silent throughout. The lights had been turned low at the medium's request and the sputtering logs in the great hearth threw red and orange shadows about the spacious room.

The experiment would entail none of the usual paraphernalia beloved of mystics and spiritualists; we did not sit with the tips of our little fingers touching, forming an unbroken circle; Lavery had not asked us to concentrate or to focus our minds upon anything at all. The antique clock on the wall ticked off the seconds monotonously as the medium closed his eyes and lay back his head in his high-backed chair. We all watched him closely.

Gradually his breathing deepened and the rise and fall of his chest became regular. Then, almost before we knew it and coming as something of a shock, his hands tightened on the leather arms of his chair and his mouth began a silent series of spastic jerks and twitches. My blood, already cold, seemed to freeze at the sight of this, and I had half risen to my feet before his face grew still. Then Lavery's lips drew back from his teeth and he opened and closed his mouth several times in rapid succession, as if gnashing his teeth through a blind, idiot grin. This only lasted for a second or two, however, and soon his face once more relaxed. Suddenly conscious that I still crouched over the table, I forced myself to sit down.

As we continued to watch him, a deathly pallor came over the medium's features and his knuckles whitened where he gripped the arms of his chair. At this point I could have sworn that the temperature of the room dropped sharply, abruptly. The others did not seem to notice the fact, being far too fascinated with the motion of Lavery's exposed Adam's apple to be aware of anything else. That fleshy knob moved up and down the full length of his throat, while the column of his windpipe thickened and contracted in a sort of slow muscular spasm. And at last Lavery spoke. He spoke - and at the sound I could almost feel the blood congealing in my veins!

For this was in no way the voice of a man that crackled, hissed and gibbered from Lavery's mouth in a - language? - which surely never originated on this world or within our sphere of existence. No, it was the voice of... something else. Something monstrous!

Interspaced with the insane cough, whistle and stutter of harshly alien syllables and cackling cachinnations, occasionally there would break through a recognizable combination of sounds which roughly approximated our pronunciation of **'Atlach-Nacha;'** but this fact had no sooner made itself plain to me than, with a wild shriek, Lavery hurled himself backwards - or was *thrown* backwards - so violently that he overturned his chair, rolling free of it to thrash about upon the floor.

Since I was directly opposite Lavery at the table, I was the last to attend him. Lord Marriot and Turnbull on the other hand were at his side at once, pinning him to the floor and steadying him. As I shakily joined them I saw that Old Danford had backed away into the farthest corner of the room, holding up his hands before him as if to ward off the very blackest of evils.

With an anxious inquiry I hurried toward him. He shook me off and made straight for the door.

'Danford!' I cried. 'What on earth is -' But then I saw the way his eyes bulged and how terribly he trembled in every limb. The man was frightened for his life, and the sight of him in this condition made me forget my own terror in a moment.

'Danford,' I repeated in a quieter tone of voice. 'Are you well?'

By this time Lavery was sitting up on the floor and staring uncertainly about. Lord Marriot joined me as Danford opened the library door to stand for a moment facing us. All the blood seemed to have drained from his face; his hands fluttered like trapped birds as he stumbled backwardss out of the room and into the passage leading to the main door of the house.

'Abomination!' he finally croaked, and no sign of his customary '*harumph!*' 'A presence - monstrous - ultimate abomination - *God help us...!*'

'Presence?' Lord Marriot repeated, taking his arm. 'What is it, Danford? What's wrong, man?'

The old man tugged himself free. He seemed now somewhat recovered, but still his face was ashen and his trembling unabated. 'A presence, yes,' he hoarsely answered, 'a monstrous presence! I could not even try to exorcise... *that!*' And he turned and staggered along the corridor to the outer door.

'But where are you going, Danford?' Marriot called after him.

'Away,' came the answer from the door. 'Away from here. I'll - I'll be in touch,

Marriot - but I cannot stay here now.' The door slammed behind him as he stumbled into darkness and a moment or two later came the roar of his car's engine.

When the sound had faded into the distance, Lord Marriot turned to me with a look of astonishment on his face. He asked: 'Well, what was all that about? Did he see something, d'you think?'

'No David,' I shook my head, 'I don't think he *saw* anything. But I believe he sensed something - something perhaps apparent to him through his religious training - and he got out before it could sense him!'

We stayed the night in the house, but while bedrooms were available we all chose to remain in the library, nodding fitfully in our easy chairs around the great fireplace. I for one was very glad of the company, though I kept this fact to myself, and I could not help but wonder if the others might not now be similarly apprehensive.

Twice I woke with a start in the huge quiet room, on both occasions feeding the red-glowing fire. And since that blaze lasted all through the night, I could only assume that at least one of the others was equally restless...

In the morning after a frugal breakfast (Lord Marriot kept no retainers in the place; none would stay there, and so we had to make do for ourselves), while the others prowled about and stretched their legs or tidied themselves up, I saw and took stock of the situation. David, concerned about the aged clergyman, rang him at home and was told by Danford's housekeeper that her master had not stayed at home overnight. He had come home in a tearing rush at about nine o' clock, packed a case, told her that he was off 'up North' for a few days' rest, and had left at once for the railway station. She also said that she had not liked his colour.

The old man's greatcoat still lay across the arm of a chair in the library where he had left in his frantic hurry of the night before. I took it and hung it up for him, wondering if he would ever return to the house to claim it.

Lavery was baggy-eyed and dishevelled and he complained of a splitting headache. He blamed his condition on an overdose of his host's sherry, but I knew for a certainty that he had been well enough before his dramatic demonstration of the previous evening. Of that demonstration, the medium said he could remember nothing; and yet he seemed distinctly uneasy and kept casting about the room and starting at the slightest unexpected movement, so that I believed his nerves had suffered a severe jolt.

It struck me that he, surely, must have been my assistant through the night; that he had spent some of the dark hours tending the fire in the great hearth. In any case, shortly after lunch and before the shadows of afternoon began to creep, he made his excuses and took his departure. I had somehow known that he would. And so three of us remained... three of the original five.

But if Danford's unexplained departure of the previous evening had disheartened Lord Marriot, and while Lavery's rather premature desertion had also struck a discordant note, at least Turnbull stood straight and strong on the side of our host. Despite Old Danford's absence, Turnbull would still go ahead with his part of the plan; an exorcist could always be found at some later date, if such were truly necessary. And certainly Lavery's presence was not prerequisite to Turnbull's forthcoming performance. Indeed, he wanted no one at all in attendance, desiring to be left entirely alone in the house. This was the only way he could possibly work, he assured us, and he had no fear at all about being on his own in the old place. After all, what was there to fear? This was only another experiment, wasn't it?

Looking back now I feel a little guilty that I did not argue the point a little further with Turnbull - about his staying alone in the old house overnight to sketch his automatic portrait of the unwanted tenant - but the man was so damned arrogant to my way of thinking, so sure of his theories and principles, that I offered no slightest opposition. So we all three spent the evening reading and smoking before the log fire, and as night drew on Lord Marriot and I prepared to take our leave.

Then, too, as darkness fell over the oaks crowding dense and still beyond the gardens, I once again felt that unnatural oppressiveness creeping in upon me, that weight of unseen energies hovering in the suddenly sullen air.

Perhaps, for the first time, Lord Marriot felt it too, for he did not seem at all indisposed to leaving the house; indeed, there was an uncharacteristic quickness about him, and as we drove away in his car in the direction of the local village inn, I noticed that he involuntarily shuddered once or twice. I made no mention of it; the night was chill, after all...

At the Traveller's Rest, where business was only moderate, we inspected our rooms before making ourselves comfortable in the snug. There we played cards until about ten o' clock, but our minds were not on the game. Shortly after ten thirty, Marriot called Turnbull to ask if all was going well. He returned from the telephone grumbling that Turnbull was totally ungrateful. He had not thanked Lord Marriot for his concern at all. The man demanded absolute isolation, no contact with the outside world whatever, and he complained that it would now take him well over an hour to go into his trance. After that he might begin to sketch almost immediately, or he might not start until well into the night, or there again the experiment could prove to be completely fruitless. It was all a matter of circumstance, and chances would not be improved by useless interruptions.

We had left him seated in his shirt-sleeves before a roaring fire. Close at hand were a bottle of wine, a plate of cold beef sandwiches, a sketch pad and pencils. These lay on an occasional table which he would pull into position directly in front of himself before sleeping, or, as he would have it, before 'going into trance'. There he sat, alone in that ominous old house.

Before retiring we made a light meal of chicken sandwiches, though neither one of us had any appreciable appetite. I may not speak for Marriot, but as for me... it took me until well into the wee small hours to get to sleep...

In the morning my titled fried was at my door while I was still half-way through washing. His outward appearance was ostensibly bright and breezy, but I sensed that his eagerness to get back to the old house and Turnbull was more than simply a desire to know the outcome of the latter's experiment; he was more interested in the man's welfare than anything else. Like my own, his misgivings with regard to his plan to learn something of the mysterious and alien entity at the house had grown through the night; now he would be more than satisfied simply to discover the medium well and unharmed.

And yet, what could there possibly be at the place to harm him? Again, that question.

The night had brought a heavy frost, the first of the season, and hedgerows and verges were white as from a fall of snow. Half-way through the woods, on the long gravel drive winding in toward the house, there the horror struck! Manoeuvering a slight bend, Lord Marriot cursed, applied his brakes and brought the car skidding to a jarring halt. A shape, white and grey - and hideously red - lay huddled in the middle of the drive.

It was Turnbull, frozen, lying in a crystalized pool of his own blood, limbs contorted in the agony of death, his eyes glazed orbs that stared in blind and eternal horror at a sight Lord Marriot and I could hardly imagine. A thousand circular holes of about one half-inch in diameter penetrated deep into his body, his face, all of his limbs; as if he had been the victim of some maniac with a brace and bit! Identical holes formed a track along the frosted grass verge from the house to this spot, as did Turnbull's flying footprints.

Against all my protests - weakened by nausea, white and trembling with shock as he was - still Lord Marriot raced his car the remainder of the way to the house. There we dismounted and he entered through the door which hung mutely ajar. I would not go in with him but stood dumbly wringing my hands, numb with horror, before the leering entrance.

A minute or so later he came staggering to the door. In his hand he carried a leaf from Turnbull's sketch pad. Before I could think to avert my eyes he thrust the almost completed sketch toward me, crying, 'Look! Look!'

I caught a glimpse of something bulbous and black, hairy and red-eyed - a tarantula, a bat, a dragon - whose joined legs were tipped with sharp, chitinous darts. A mere glimpse, without any real or lasting impression of detail, and yet -

'No!' I cried, throwing up my hands before my face, turning and rushing wildly back down the long drive. 'No, you fool, don't let me see it! I don't want to know! *I don't want to know!*'

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SHOP WINDOW

I10: Ravenloft 2: The House On Gryphon Hill

BY T.S.R. (£5.50)

Well, can you take yet another dose of pointy teethed nibblers? I certainly can, and this scenario is one excellent, if not the most excellent example of the genre. Following, as is so totally correct for the genre, the original Ravenloft scenario (I6), Tracy and Laura Hickman have quite superlatively re-created the style and atmosphere of the classic vampire tale, whilst at the same time never allowing the players a plot line transparent in simplicity.

This is not quite a sequal to the first adventure, nor is it a prequel, but rather a parallel story, and the idea of running both I6 and I10 in an interweaved nightmare would indeed make for a classic scenario that I, for one, would love to play in. Let me finish enthusing, and describe the contents for all you budding Bela Lugosis.

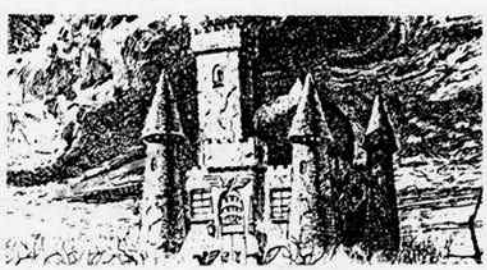
The package consists of the usual cardstock cover, and various maps and information on the inside. Also as part of the cover are the 11 cards which are used (as was a similar device in I6) to randomly determine not only the vampire's identity, but also the location of various items. These need to be recovered as part of the plot, achieved through player/referee interaction under the hypnotic trance of a PC. This makes for rapid referee integration of the information, but since the opening days of the adventure are more involved than the inevitable false calm of all horror film beginnings, this should be no problem to do between sessions.

The module is well-written, with a clear and accurate plot description leading in to atmospheric and well-written chapters on the various major locations. The pack is accompanied by a good collection of player handouts, pre-rolled characters and a map, all of which do match up perfectly with the booklet text. An event chart, on which pre-set events have been logged day by day, and further refereee arbitrated events are added, making referee control and understanding of the scenario easy and clear.

I cannot, due to both the plot and the genre, reveal too much of the actual adventure, but it includes the classic country gentry, their beautiful daughter, a village silent and deserted at night, the villagers sullen and strangely blank during the day. The players' sense of realisty is excellently broken down, perturbing events are mixed with just enough sanity to never allow any security of expectation. The resolution is very suitably tragic, with a mix of scientific and supernatural so necessary in this type of tale. The potential for running this scenario with any other RPG is enourmous. Indeed, it would be especially suitable for a late 19th. C or early 20th. Century RPG, such as Justice Inc. or CoC. All in all, an excellent product, recommended for nearly everyone. And now, just for all the players reading, and just to do it in reverse order...

"In the cold sunlight of a dying autumn, you step from your inn and stroll along the deserted streets of Mordentshire. The delirium has passed now, the hideous nightmares passed, and clear in your mind must be the task that has brought you here, to this quiet, rural fishing town. Your job, to aid the Lord and Lady Weathermay, parents of the beautiful Virginia, now strangely troubled and sleepless, as is her fiancé, the fair-haired, kind, and strangely upsetting Alchemist... **Count Von Zarovich!"**

TOM ZUNDER.



Creature Creation

PUBLISHED BY FUGATIVE GAMES (£4.95)

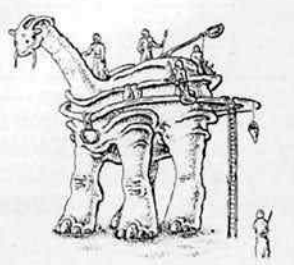
This is a system for creating semi-random 'monsters', plants and other organisms for use in any RPG, but specifically to be used as part of Fugitive's **"Worldshaker"** world creation system. The publishers claim that *'this system can produce virtually anything'*. To test this theory, I decided to have a go at creating a "one-off" creature. With no preparatory reading, and little use of creative imagination, I produced the following in a matter of minutes:-

"A creature about the size of a child, with the appearance of an 8-legged spider, with crustaceous shell armour covering its grey, wrinkly, tortoise-like skin. On the thing's head are two feelers which respond to touch, and are retractable. The thing is a coastal dweller, where it burrows lairs in the beaches to give birth to its young. Curiously, there are 3 genders of this species, and having given birth, it abandons the offspring and moves off to inhabit another's lair. It marks the new territory and patrols it regularly. Always a loner, there are only a few of this species left alive, scouring the beaches looking to pick the meat off dead sea-carrion, assisted by its chameleon- like properties and the subtle use of powerful magic spells..."

Above all else, this book is fun to use, and produces surprisingly consistent results whether for creatures, plants, humanoid races or microscopic organic disease molecules. A very well though-out product that's obviously been well researched and play-tested. This system lends itself very well to computer moderation, ie. once programmed in, a keystroke can provide truly random beasts to any GM's content. However, the designer insists that its use is not meant to be random, but rather a mixture of dice rolls and forethought, requiring the GM to select certain attributes that may make the creature more interesting, or discard those which cause inconsistencies. Personally, I prefer the random method, as this requires even more thought as you try to explain how a rhinocerous sized jelly can fly without wings!

This product is a must for anyone who enjoyed **EON** games' **QUIRKS** just for the sake of creating weird and wonderful life-forms, or for any GM wanting to personalize his campaign.

STE DILLON.



Traveller 2300

GAME DESIGNERS WORKSHOP (£14.95)

Traveller 2300 is a game based in the near future, the 24th century. Following a third world war which shatters both super- powers, much of Europe and China, the world is left to recover. After further fuel crises and sporadic wars, the world starts to explore the solar system. Through all this the most dominant power has been the French. They maintained global peace and aided the world recovery. A practical star drive is developed in the middle of the 22nd century, and the countries of the world start to explore space in the immediate vicinity. The game starts at the beginning of the 24th century. This is just two years after the Third French Empire has been inaugurated. The nations of Earth have explored up to 50 light years from Earth and over thirty colonies have been established. The scene is set for more exploration, the discovery of artefacts and establishing contact with new alien races.

Traveller 2300 is a science fiction game which creates probably the easiest background for adventure writing I have seen. There is a solid background which uses concepts that all can appreciate while not necessarily agreeing with. The Third French Empire sounds *unlikely* yet plausible. Traveller 2300 provides the means to explore unknown space and to discover new people and artefacts. This may sound a lot like **Star Trek,** but I feel it is superior because the constraints upon players and referee are far less than for Star Trek. As an introduction to SFRPGs, T2300 is also superior to **Traveller** because it is set historically and culturally closer to home. In most SF games, it is impossible to find a virgin piece of a world or a star system. In this, even planets within 10 light years of Earth have not been properly explored, and further out are planets that have never been landed upon. All this combines to make T2300 an exciting and different game with potential to be great if well supported by GDW.

Contents: The game consists of 2 rule books, a near star map, a near star list, a forms booklet, a starting adventure and some reasonably good size dice (not the type where a magnifying glass is also supplied so that the numbers can be read). The two rule books are split into the Players' book and the Referee's book.

The **Players' book** deals with character generation, skills, careers, equipment, weapons and a lot of background setting. Character generation is fairly simple and consists of choosing a career and allocating points to skills allowed. Every 1-10 years the character has to succeed in passing a turning point or he/she leaves that career and character generation is over. The skills allowed are different for each career and the player decides on skill points allocation. They are much the same as Traveller skills and cover a wide range of activities. The histories and world political geography are well set out and plausible in most cases (even if Britain was omitted from the Political Geography section). The equipment and weapons are also well thought out and reflect the beginnings of a hi-tech civilisation.

The **Referee's book** is where the complications set in. It provides the basic rules of play. There is one rule which can deal with anything from starship combat to finding a needle in a haystack. This rule is called **Task Resolution** and is probably the most generic rule I have ever seen. It provides a frame work from which referees can give reasoned and plausible account of the chances of the success of any action. The task system is based on five levels of difficulty ranging from easy to impossible, easy being a throw of 3+, on a D10, to 19+ for impossible. To this D10 throw are added modifiers which are based on relevant skills and characteristics. Task Resolution is therefore a process which is fixed by the referee at the time of application and so can increase the chances of a fair and realistic result. I feel that the Task Resolution system makes T2300 a much more accessible and easy to play game than it might have been. A good system overall, which was previewed in **Twilight 2000.**

The Referee's book also contains details of all types of combat from hand to hand to indirect fire, ship listing, non player character, world mapping, animal encounters and the most complicated part of the game - world generation. World generation looks to be a swift copy from **Book 6** of Traveller. There are differences, though, and T2300's system is much easier, but still complex.

Both books have some very good artwork but both also contain some ridiculously bad artwork which lowers the overall presentation of the game. The books have soft covers which seem to be very popular with game companies but not the buying public. There seems to be few typesetting errors in the game, but there do seem to be some errors in the rules. I have so far found three: One in combat and two in character generation.

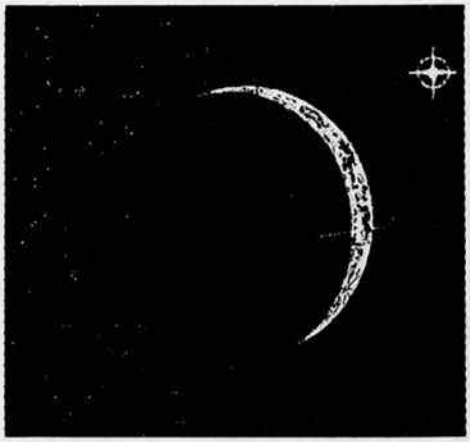
The combat error is a simple one. The character has a life level for use in combat, but no mention is made as to how these are used. I suggest that the **Damage Points Value** of a weapon is subtracted from the life level of a character when he is hit. If a player reaches Zero life level, then he is seriously wounded and will die soon if not treated.

The next two errors are more complicated but need explaining if the game is to work properly. The first is in the turning point a character has to pass to go onto another tour of duty in his/her chosen career. In the paragraph on this on pp22 of the players' book it states that the first turning point (tp) is easy, the second is routine, the third is difficult, the fourth is formidable and the last is impossible. The scores for these throws are as follows 3+, 7+, 11+, 15+ and 19+ with a maximum bonus of +4 to the d10 roll. Therefore, the max. score that can be thrown is 13. (A 0 counts as zero not ten). This makes the last two turning points impossible. However, it also states that no character can pass the 5th tp. This does not tally with the above. I suggest altering the table to read differently. That is that the 1st and 2nd tps are **easy,** the 3rd is **routine,** the 4th is **difficult,** the 5th is **formidable,** the 6th is **impossible.** This tallies much better with the statement on max. number of tps that can be passed. I'm not sure that this passage is actually in error, just that it is badly worded and set out so that the impression of an error is given. The second error is far more tangible, as it means that characters can bump themselves on tables and fall unconscious. In the passage on life levels and consciousness levels, it states that a character has **Size** (a score from between 1-20) **divided** by 20 consciousness levels. This means that most characters have **zero** consciousness levels. In combat, a character falls unconscious when the total of shock and stun points he has received equals his/ her cons. level. Even a light wound from a small pistol can give the character a stun, so most characters are going to drop after their first scratch. For animals, Cons. levels are calculated as MASS/20 which gives much more adequate values. I suggest that a typing error has occured in the section on humans and that cons. levels should be MASS/20 and life levels should be MASS/10 which gives much better values and tally far better with NPCs in combat who now fall unconscious only after taking a total of three stuns plus shocks.

The **near star map** provides a 3D space for exploration. The **near star list** is a classification for every star giving its name, magnitude, size, spectra and its X, Y, Z, co-ordinates from Sol.

Overall, the game is well produced and set out. Most of the Artwork is good and the wealth of information and cultural references make it suitable for all ages. I am not sure of what age range it is aimed at but it seems to be the younger player has become disenchanted with the more restrictive games and feels that Traveller is too complicated. Apart from the apparent errors I have found, the game seems to be well balanced and is lacking, fortunately, in the *'America is mighty'* attitude of many games set in the near future. This will please may people who feel that certain recent games are just symptoms of attempted American dominance of the European World.

JAMES CHAPPLE.



Runequest 3

PUBLISHED BY GAMES WORKSHOP under licence from AVALON-HILL (£7.95)

There can't be many readers who don't know that I am a **RuneQuest** fan. True, my GM days originated with the 'old' RuneQuest, the great Gloranthan campaigns that were exclusively **Chaosium**. The exorbitant price of RuneQuest III, when published by Avalon-Hill, compounded by the extraordinary changes in both appearance and content made me turn my back on it. Still clinging to my battered copy of RQII, when this one landed on my desk, my attitude changed. There is something about this version that makes you **want** to read it. I doubt whether it is the new low price, since mine was provided courtesy of GW, but rather the sleek presentation, the colourful interior illustrations and the compact "all-in-one-book" format that is at first appealing, and absorbing, and I intend to review this as both a comparison with RQII, and as a new game.

This hardback contains the first installment from GW, who aim to produce a whole series of hardbacks in the ensuing months. Geared more towards newcomers than the old RQ system, the editorial staff have cottoned on to the wider audience which RPGs now attract. The reader is drawn gently through character generation (incorporating more in the lines of character back- ground, to add "feeling" right at the start). There's very little changed in this department, with the odd exception such as APPearance replacing CHArisma, and the introduction of Fatigue Points.

Each characteristic and play element is illustrated with examples, using the Saga of Cormac the Pict; very useful for beginners, or for getting a quick overview of the system!

The only drawback is that the sample character sheet (with permission granted to photocopy!) is located at the back of the book, and is difficult to tear out for impatient bods like me.

The **combat** mechanics, for those who don't know, consist of spell-casting, attack and simultaneous parry, performed in sequence according to the **Strike Rank** (SR) of the character. **Damage** is affected by weapon type, personal modifiers, armour type and effects the injured character's Hit Points value. Non-combat **skills** are effected by modifiers as well; certain characteristics have primary, secondary or negative effects on the PC's skill ability. Calculating a modifier for skill types (eg. agility skills, manipulation, knowledge skills, etc.) is much less cumbersome than referring to tables and, once entered on the character sheet, can easily be used to introduce new skills and see how the character copes. As these modifiers come in single unit numbers, it also allows the PC to have a true % skill of say 27%, rather than just a unit of 5.

The game **mechanics** consist of 1 main system; the percentile (%) dice roll. The character has a predetermined chance of performing any action, which he has to roll equal to or less than to succeed. If he rolls especially low, he has achieved a **special** success, or even a **critical** one, with suitable benefits, whether this be whilst leaping a puddle, or when engaged in mortal combat. If, however, he rolls exceptionally high and **fumbles**, this can be rather disastrous, especially when he's got few **Hit Points** left!

The main thing about the % system is the ease with which a character's **improvement** can be recorded. If he makes successful use of a skill during an adventure (and succeeds in a subsequent skill-type roll), then he can earn 1-6 bonus points, making it easier to succeed with that skill next time, but harder to improve.

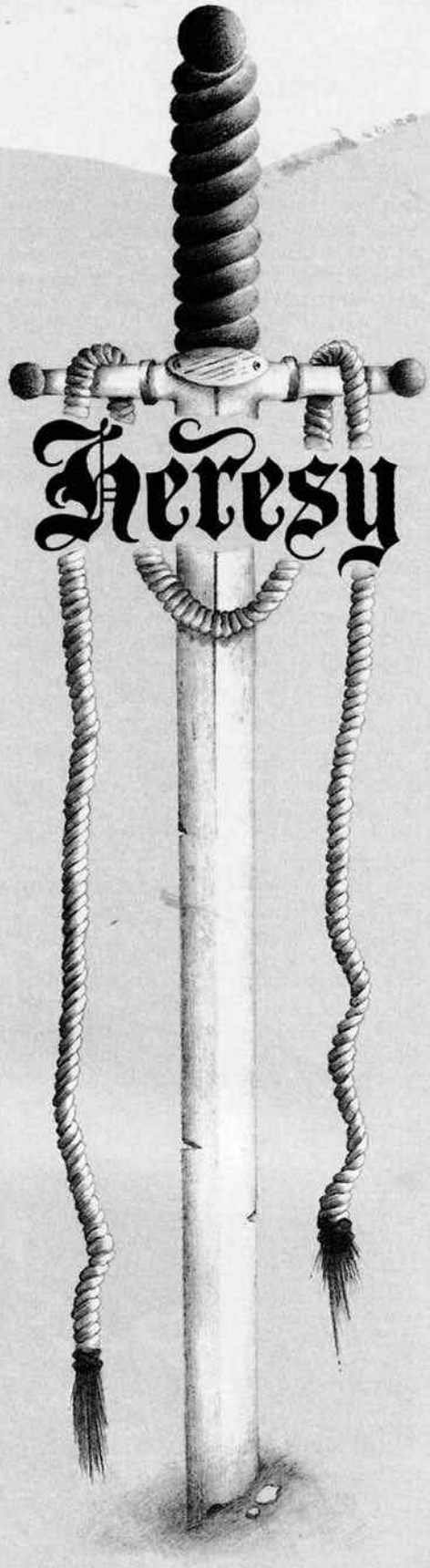
Magic is divided into 3 categories nowadays (unlike the 2 types of old), or rather, Chaosium have presented 3 attitudes toward magic for the PC to adopt. The first is **Spirit Magic**, the low-power spells which require but a magical focus, the spoken word and a movement of the hand: the rapid-fire battle type spells! Such spells are readily available (at a cost) to all adventurers, not just mages or clerics, as in the character-class structure of other FRP games. **Divine Magic** is rather special, in that it is only available to religious Initiates or Priests (Which, incidentally, any PC can achieve through devotion, experience and donation!)- the disadvantage is that religious devotion requires the tithing of monies, restrictions on learning and adventuring opportunity, but the benefits will far outweigh these; Powerful spells and the support of the deity. The third type of magic, **Sorcery**, is avauilable to agnostic PCs in the game, based on the belief in an impersonal universe. It is not associated with evil as such, just the physical properties of the universe. This is potentially the most powerful of RQ's magic. It is this section that suffers most, I feel, as there are but 3 religions which are given the barest of mentions, as opposed to the full richness of the Gloranthan pantheon we used to know and love. This will probably be the first area to be expanded by GW, as it is certainly the most needed. The only other shortcomings are the lack of adventures; there's not even a hint of a mini-scenario, and it is also lacking on detailed background to non-human civilizations.

It's interesting to note at this point that the word "cult" is now largely replaced by the word "religion", alongside a statement that *"the word (cult) is never used to connote evilness or illegality"*. Make from that what you will, but it is nevertheless evidence that the pressures of societal norms **do** permeate the gaming sub-culture.

Enough description of how RuneQuest actually plays, and more for the potential buyer: What you get is nearly 200 pages, well-illustrated and effectively presented with efficient tables and a thorough index. This gives you character generation, the combat element, adventurer skills of all types, the effects of a character's living environment (you know, everyday things like poison, disease, asphyxiation, etc.), creatures and non-human races including those peculiar to Glorantha (such as Halflings), and those whose origins must surely belong in Glorantha (eg. the lustful, hated Broo!)

The difference between this and the Avalon-Hill RQIII is obvious; it has been genericised- it no longer pretends to be for "Fantasy Europe" or "Glorantha"; it's just a game system for games players. I like it, and I think it will be a lot more beneficial to those FRPers looking for another game system than GW's own hybrid, Warhammer. It's cheaper and it's a far nicer production. Congratulations to all involved with it.

STE DILLON.



INTRODUCTION:

Following the success of our religious theme in issue #7, and as further encouragement to each GM to develop his own campaign setting and culture, we take a look this issue at religion in a medieval setting. More inportantly, we consider the effects of heresy in these times.

Firstly, a definition of Heresy:

"Opinion or doctrine contrary to the orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church, or to the accepted doctrine on any subject."

Many role-playing games (those that don't ignore the issue entirely) have a problem with *religious classes.* Primarily, there is the question of why a cleric should be adventuring in the first place, and secondly: what is his relationship to his church?

Some attempts have been made to rectify this situation by extending clerical abilities (eg. conversion), or defining the God/cleric interface more closely (eg. restricted spells). These efforts, while useful, have not solved the problem of creating a reasonable and playable background for the clerical character. It is my contention that the solution depends upon the religion itself, rather than the individual character. In this article I shall attempt to demonstrate this; first, by looking at some theological guidelines, and then going on to examine the scope for setting up heresies, and player role-playing possibilities.

TYPES OF RELIGION

The first question is: what type of religion do we wish to portray in our campaign? There are basically four varieties, starting with the most primitive:

1) **Animism**, in which the world of inanimate matter is believed to be the manifestation of various nature spirits. Three common varieties are *Druidism, Totemism* and *Ancestor Worship.* These are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Totemism is common among nomadic peoples, while Druidism would be expected in a sedentary population. Ancestor worship may be held in common with either of the others but also exists in its own right.

2) **Polytheism**, or the worship of multiple Gods. Note that the devout will only worship a single deity, though bound to admit the existence of the entire pantheon. Elements of animism may re-appear within such religions, for instance: dryads in the greek mythos.

3) **Dualism**. In this system there are two Gods in opposition to one another, usually representative of Good and Evil. The 'Law versus Chaos' struggles so popular in fantasy, may be seen as a pantheistic version of this.

4) **Monotheism**, or the worship of a single God. Christianity falls within this category because the Devil is regarded as a fallen angel, rather than a God with creative powers of his own.

ELEMENTS OF FAITH

The next decision to make is, what does the religion believe? What explanations do they hold for the creation, etc. All religions have some sort of faith, which can be considered in a number of categories:

a) **Creation**: how, and/or by whom, was Life, the Universe and Everything created? Was it all the same? Was the Universe created bt God but Earth by Satan? were different races created by different Gods?

b) **Destiny**: does the race exist for some purpose? If so, what? Are they mere pawns in a cosmic game, figures in the landscape of a dreaming God, or do they hold the power of the balance in their hands?

c) **God on Earth**: Does God ever manifest himself on Earth? If so, for what sort of purposes? Crusades? To tip the balance? To start new, or revive old, religious movements? Is the sovereign always an incarnation of a God?

d) **Churches**: Why does the church exist? Do the Gods require worship or sacrifices (what kind, how often and where?) in order to survive, or do they have an independant existence? If, say, a God is patron to a city: to what extent does the God mirror the actions and feelings of his domain, and vice versa? Who may enter into priesthood: male only, female only, both? Are there vestal virgins, sacred harlots? What about initiation rites?

e) **Fate**: Are individuals responsible for their own destiny, or are they fated? Perhaps, partly both?

f) **After Death:** Do people have souls? In any case what happens after death? Is there Heaven/Hell, Nirvana, Valhalla, Re-incarnation, Limbo, the Halls of Waiting, or is that it? Another possibility is that people are only born with the *potential* for a soul, which must be developed through a series of mental and spiritual exercises.

g) **Recruitment**: Does the church seek to convert heathens, or is it exclusive to a particular cultural or ethnic background? Again, it might be completely tolerant (eg **Baha'is**).

h) **Messiah**: Was there a founder of the religion? If so, was he a prophet or divine? Did he have a miraculous birth? What portents foretold his coming? How did he come to his ministry? What are some highlights of his teaching, in terms of events? What about his death: was he translated like Elijah, did he ascend like Jesus, or did he just die? What about resurrection? Did he have followers and how did they spread the word? What about his family?

i) **Gospel**: Does the religion have holy writings or is it all transmitted by word of mouth? If the latter, how: rote learning? if the former: does the religion take some or all of the writtings literally? If only some, then which? What scope is made for interpretation on the remaining parts?

j) **Behaviour**: What is correct behaviour: for the layman? For the priest? For the worshippers?

CORRUPTION

To what extent a church becomes decadent will depend on many factors, but it may be assumed to take place after some centuries in control. Power, as we

know, has the infallable ability to corrupt, and when you have the power to make or break kings and nations, it is hardly surprising that evil reaches into high places. It is relatively simple to understand: once it is seen that the clergy do indeed have power, then young people who crave that control may enter into holy office solely to acquire it, regardless of any sense of religion. Some of them eventually, will rise to the top, and then all sorts of disgraces may set in. It should also be noted that churches are mostly organised heirarchically, and such a structure is ready-made for those desirous of power, particularly if there is a belief in something akin to **Papal Infallibility.**

Of course, what one religion regards as corrupt another may see as holy, so there is a large dependance on what the particular religion believes. Ultimately, most corruption is directed towards the indulgence of worldly passions: whether that be money, wine, sex or power. Rather than give guidelines, the following are some examples of what went on in the middle ages:

1) **Simony**, or selling of sacred objects (fake or otherwise).

2) **Selling indulgences.** The church sold 'forgivemess for sins' which would 'assure' the purchaser's entry to heaven.

3) Despite the ban on women priests there is rumoured to have been a **female Pope** (cf "Pope Joan" by Shaw).

4) Popes had both **mistresses** and children, and cardinals resorted to intrigue and assassination in order to be elected Pope (for example, the **Borgias**).

5) **Convents** had to have a male priest to say mass for them, because of the interdiction on female priests. Sex between the priest and his flock was not uncommon (see Russell's **"The Devils"** and the story of Abelard and Heloise).

6) **Crusades**, the great christian missions to free the holy land, also happened to be a convenient way for impoverished monarchs to raise a tax on the people, as well as averting potential unrest at home.

7) Various quasi-religious organisations like the **Knights Templar** (Paladins) resorted to at least questionable, if not profane, practices (see "Call of Cthulhu" and "The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail").

ALTERNATIVES

Is it surprising, in an environment like this, that there are dissenting voices? No. Once there is corruption there will equally be a backlash. The first variety of dissent is within orthodxy, and can take a number of forms:

1) **Monks** or **nuns** who retreated from the world into a monastery or convent, advocating a simple life, living from the land. Frequently, the monks were so industrious that they became rich themselves.

2) **Friars.** A Friar is basically a wandering monk of no fixed abode. The principle is that since he does no toil but prayer, and lives off alms, then he cannot become rich. While there was no female, Christian equivalent of the friar, there is no reason why she shouldn't exist in a fantasy setting. The friar will have a home monastery to which he may return from time to time.

3) **Hermits.** Those who seek individual isolation to wrestle with their souls, practice meditation and learn wisdom. More arcane arts are practised by the hermits of some religions. For example, Tibetan monks would retreat to a cave in order to practice what in AD&D is called "Protection from cold". Other skills included the creation of a tulpa - the materialisation of a thought-form; and long-distance running at extreme speeds. Hermits have been known to take abodes other than caves; for instance, **Simon Stylites** lived on top of a pillar for twenty years.

4) **Ascetics.** These are more common in the east. Fakirs are one variety. Basically they mortify the flesh in order to harden the spirit. Lying on beds of nails is well known, but there have been others who would never sit down or lie down, would look at the sun without closing their eyes (and go blind), and so forth.

RIVALS

Before considering the second variety of backlash, it would be as well to ponder the possibilities of schismatic movements. These normally come about in three ways:

1) Through separation by geography, politics or war. The best example here, is again christianity. After Rome turned to Christ, there were soon enclaves of believers throughout the empire. After the fall of Rome, and through the dark ages, many parts of christendom were cut off from one another and, inevitably, developed in diverging directions. By the middle ages, contact had been re-established with the churches in Russia, Greece, Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia but the differences had become too great and they could not be resolved. They did not, however, wage war on one another, for the simple reason that their spheres of influence did not clash.

2) A heresy may get strong enough to establish itself. This is rare and will occur when the reformers have powerful political friends. A good example is the rise of protestantism in England: would it ever have succeeded had not Henry VIII wished to rid himself of the yoke of Rome?

3) In polytheistic and other more tolerant religions it may be relatively easy to establish a new religion, since it rapidly ceases to be so. The reason is that it is readily accomodated as a breakaway sect rather than anything radically different. This applies to new movements who disagree with the founding church over interpretation rather then dogma. An example here would be the whirling dervishes: they are devout muslims who follow the islamic code, but have variant beliefs on some parts of the Koran which are open to interpretation. Such leniency on the part of the orthodox can be highly flexible.

HERESY

The second form of backlash is one form of heresy, of which there are basically three types:

1) In reaction to corruption, heresies may spring up of the hair-shirt variety. Typically they are extreme and concentrate on those particulars which we today recognise as being symptomatic of repressed sexuality. Examples are the Nestorians, and Flagellantes, and, as recently as the last world war, in Russia, the Skopje.

2) Divergences of doctrine. For example the followers of Bishop Arius

believed that Christ was not born divine but became so because of his purity.

3) The influences of other religions. Dualism had a profound effect on many christian heresies: for instance, the Bogomils, Albigenses, and Cathars. All of these believed the Devil not merely *capable* of creation, but that he was in fact the creator of the Earth. As such, men were inherently evil, so, necessarily, was sex, which was to be abhorred and only to be indulged in for the purpose of procreation. Members of these sects were urged to take vows of celibacy once they had produced offspring. It is likely that these beliefs directly influenced the first group.

One final point: heresies are, by definition, a sect belonging to the same religion. The exact point at which a heresy becomes a religion in its own right is moot, and depends upon which side of the fence you sit. Largely the distinction comes down to power: when did christianity cease to be a judaistic heresy? - Once it was acknowledged by Rome and the empire. When did protestantism cease to be a catholic heresy? - Once it was supported by HenryVIII and other european monarchs.

TOLERANCE

It may be presumed that any movement deemed to be a heresy will be castigated as such. The question that is more important is: will the heretics be persecuted? The same query also applies to members of minority, or foreign religions. In other words: how tolerant is the church?

The table (top right) is a guideline, and GMs should feel free to modify it as they see fit. The total should be added to give percentage for persecution to be instituted. In some cases, for instance where a heresy is growing more popular, repeated rolls may be required over a period of time.

Some of this may need explanation. To illustrate, let me use the example of the Albigenses in the 12th century. Whilst they had been declared heretical long before, it was not until the Albigenses had approaching 20 bishoprics throughout southern France, Switzerland and northern Italy that the church in Rome finally acted. They did two things: first, they called for a crusade against the heretics, and second, they created a new institution to deal with them: the Inquisition.

Two things were learnt. The church discovered that the Inquistion was a wonderful way of keeping in control of the masses - hence the increased likelihood of persecution following its creation. Secondly, the secular authorities dicovered that a) you can avert problems at home by whipping up hatred of someone else, and b) you can seize the victim's wealth too.

Finally, this table should not be used for two deities within the same pantheon, unless they are sworn enemies. Nor should it be used when there are several religions vying with one another to become the established church. This situation is rare, and only likely to occur in an empire which has grown too big, too fast (eg. 4th century Rome).

OPTIONAL TOLERANCE TABLE FOR GMs

Creed of established church is specifically tolerant in general (-5)
Creed of established church is specifically tolerant to other religions (-25)
Established church actively seeks converts (+15)
Creed of established church is believed literally (+25)
Established church is dualist (+10)
Established church is monotheistic (+25)
If persection, crusade etc. has been previously instituted (+20)
If all previous persecutions/crusades have been disastrous (-15)
If culture of church has just conquered nation of the rival (+30)
If heresy based on difference in interpretation (-20)
If heresy based on difference in dogma (+25)
If holy places of established church are occupied by rival (+15)
If power base of established church is threatened (up to +50)
If politically expedient (up to +50)
If religion is directly opposed to established church (+15)
If religion does not seek converts from established church (-5)

ROLE-PLAYING

The quasi-medieval world is popular amongst both games manufacturers and players. It provides a model of a much more interesting religious background than one which is wholely pantheistc:

I) there is an established church heirarchy with mulitlpe associated branches including the Inquisition, so-called orders of chivalry, monks, friars, nuns, Jesuits et al.

II) There are a number of schismatic christian churches who are divided by doctrine, distance and political outlook.

III) There are other religions (viz: Islam and Judaism) with whom Christianity is in contact and who, while adoring the same deity, have totally dissimilar beliefs. Periodic wars occur between christianity and Islam.

Iv) Even further afield, civilisation is beginning to come into contact with other cultures who do not even recognise the same God! They are, of course, ignorant and must be shown the light. In the near east are other monotheistic religions, as well as dualists; whilst India, China and Japan are polytheistic. These may be expected to have their own sects, heresies and associated groups. Meanwhile, the tribes on the America plains and the Russian steppe are totemistic, while other forms of animism exist throughout the third world.

v) Despite its proselytising abroad, the church is increasingly venal at home, and there is a growing market for heretical preachers.

vI) Whilst individuals from other cultures and with other beliefs are tolerated, this is not true for groups of non-indiginous races. Peoples such as the Jews and Romanies (Gypsies) are persecuted throughout Europe: from Russia to Britain.

vII) Through the influences of jewish mysticism (Cabalism) there is an increase in alchemy, astrology and the like.

vIII) There is a simultaneous increase in the study of science, similarly challenging the church's world view.

Ix) Minority religious cults (Druidism, Wicca, Satanism) flourish in secret.

This then is the world of medieval times, rife with suspicion and subterfuge. It is an ideal setting for a campaign, in which a clerical character has a particular and relevant role. As opposed to the usual rather lame excuses for a man of God being out adventuring, there are several very plausible ones within this milieu, which will also predispose the cleric to particular types of spells:

1) Missionary - Impressing others, healing, defence.

2) Friar - Ceremony, defence, healing.

3) Mendicant (wandering) **priest:** probably as a member of an heretical or minority sect - Ceremony, oratory.

4) Padre attached to a military grouping - Healing, defence.

5) Inquisitor - Impressing others, chastisement. They may also have special magic items such as +3 finger-nail extractors.

6) Witch-finder- Detection, exorcism, defence, turning undead.

7) Shamans (totemic) and **Witch Doctors** (ancester worship) are more suitable as NPCs. The former might well be shape-shifters, while the latter will have extensive knowledge of the undead, and might be sought out by apprentice necromancers. Other possibilities include clerics sent on a quest to atone for their sins, ordered to infiltrate an heretical sect, working with the Inquistion to hunt down heretics, and so forth.

There is one further consideration: relics. Many of these were fraudulent but some were not. Fragments of the true cross and saint's bones may be regarded as permanent 'potions of healing' or as equivalent to a 'candle of invocation'. In MERP they would correspond to a + spell adder or possibly a daily item. Other relics, such as the Turin Shroud, the spear that pierced Christ's side, the crown of thorns, the Holy Grail will have unique properties; the spear, for example, might act as a vorpal blade in the hands of a good user, but as a cursed backbiter if one of evil alignment should wield it.

To conclude: there is far more potential in theology than is included in most game systems. A comprehensive and realistic religious background opens up new campaign possibilities, and makes the cleric a more rounded and reasonable character to role-play.

BY PHILIP ST. LEGER

AUGUST INTENTIONS:

Prince August- the firm that puts the 'roll' into role-playing-- were displaying some welcome products. In March, they will be releasing single fantasy moulds (**£1.75** each). The range includes large creatures such as orcs, Goblins, Ghouls and Armoured Skeletons, and each mould will come with a special sticker. Collecting eight stickers in a special album entitles you to a free single figure mould, a bonus which all home casters should welcome. Since it is possible to recoup the cost of a mould by casting as little as 4 figures, players of tabletop fantasy games should take a closer look.

For the role player, P.A. is expanding its high quality ready-cast figures range. 6 character classes will be available in 4 different positions- each position being suitable for a different role in an adventure. Choose from fighting, casual and asleep (or dead!) positions, and one position unique to the class. The first of these will be available soon. The range will consist of a magic user, armoured cleric, elf girl, fighter, ranger and half-orc thief.

Collectors should look out for the cast-your-own elf chess set, which allows you to cast all 32 figures from just three moulds.

RIPPING TIMES:

Away from the Toy Fair, the live roleplaying explosion continues to, er... well, explode. **Fools and Heroes** is an amateur society to publicise, promote and organise the LARP hobby, and at the same time ensure that no-one gets ripped off again. It is a complimentary organisation to the professional groups like **Mythlore** which already exist.

The group is based in the East Midlands, and events are usually held over weekends. Major events lasting a whole weekend are also staged and usually consist of two or three adventures, training, trading, costume making and a banquet.

Newcomers to live roleplaying who go to a Fools and Heroes event have their first adventure free; good news for anyone cntemplating taking up LARP. Member ship comes from all over the country, so even if the East Midlands are a little inaccessible to you, it may be possible to find a current member who can help you out.

For more details, write to:- **Fools & Heroes, 152 St. Aidan's Close, Norfolk Park, Sheffield S2 2NQ.** And tell them the Crier sent you!

GOING DOWN TO LIVERPOOL:

A few things caught the Crier's eye on the **Games of Liverpool** stand, including a stray copy of the **Barbara Cartland** Romance Game. No one, it had been thought, would have the nerve to import this; perhaps it says something about these Games people!

Hoot of the fair had to be **Wabbit's Wevenge**; Pacesetter's sequel board game to **Wabbit Wampage**. Wambo Wabbit is out to avenge his kin and stop McGreedy from turning them into fur coats. Play Wambo or McGreedy and colleagues Bernie the dog or Randy Andy the dump cat in a weally wacky game of cutthroat strategy.

The **Chill** rolegame gets a special **Creature Feature**, a supplement which allows you to play the monster. Fans of Chris Elliot's and Dick Edwards' **"American Excess" (Fantasy Chronicles #6) may not need this product, otherwise** seems an invaluable and fun addition to the Chill range. Packed with puns (at least in the blurb), it should also be good for a groan or two.

QUESTING BEAST:

The Toy Fair also had its turkeys. The Crier's **Bernard Mathews** roast award goes to **Quest For the Dragon**. Quest lets players wander round a variable layout dungeon, and build up strength until their character is ready to kill the dragon at the centre of the complex.

The game appears to have been produced on the assumption that big packages sell, and hang the quality. It plays like **Warlock of Firetop Mountain** without the detective element.

Quest will undoubtedly find its adherents: the Crier's tip for the biggest is dust.

TOY TOWN REBELLION:

Late January saw a boom in the amount of product news. **The Earls Court Toy & Hobby Fair** gathers large numbers of toy and game manufacturers under one roof, all of which have new products on show. The trade and journalists get a chance to see what is coming up for next Christmas, and a rough insight into the big toys and games for the forthcoming year. This issue's crier reports on the goodies on show for Fantasy and SF gamers.

PIXIE POWER:

The Portly Pixie is an unusual name for an unusual company. An extension of their specialist costume hire company, **Roger Price** and **Helen Holdforth** are offering live action role playing via 3 scenario situations; The Dukedom of Chouse (**fantasy**), the Planet of Phacke (**SF**), and the Deductive Society (**murder mysteries**). They also arrange dinner parties, either mystery based or a medieval banquet, as well as 'killer' type games and traditional RPGs, taking the concept of a LARP society one step further than many. And it all looks very efficient as well. For details:-

Party Packages, 160, Hearsall Lane, Coventry CV5 6HH.

VISIONS OF FANTASY:

Adventurer cover artist **Peet Ellison** (#4 and next issue #9) will be displaying some originals alongside 9 other fantasy artists in an exhibition from 17th. June to friday 26th. June this year. More details are available from:-

The Association of Illustrators Gallery, 1, Colville Place, London W1P 1HN.

WORSHIPFUL COMPANY:

TSR (UK) have a new board game, **Legend of Heroes**, due out in late spring. Designed by **Graeme Morris,** it aims to capture the elements of role playing and put them into a fun family board game.

Three more Dragonlance books are expected: **The Dragonlance Companion, Dragonlance Tales: The Magic of Krynn,** and **Art of the Dragonlance Saga.** Art is, the Crier presumes, some legendary hero of Krynn.

One gem from TSR's catalogue to look forward to is **Snarfquest: The Book**, which should already be out in the U.S. It will be far more fun and literate than GW's **Thrud** special.

WORKSHOP WONDERS:

The Nottingham giant seemed somewhat subdued this year. Previous displays have been based around space shuttles and castles- this year was limited to a few graceful yellow pavilions atop the stand. But the range of new goods was as incredible as ever:

There was the new **Realms of Chaos** for **Warhammer** tabletop rules/role play, and then **Death on the Reik,** the third adventure in the **Warhammer** role play campaign. **Warhammer 40,000; Rogue Trader** seems even nearer production. This takes the **Warhammer** fantasy battles system and plants it firmly in a futuristic setting. Again, a mammoth hardback packed with illustrations-- but possibly no good rules.

BY IAN MARSH

Adventurer Snoop Extraordinaire

FANZINES FOREVER...?

by Ben Goodale & Alex Bardy

LATEST RELEASES!

After last issue's Foray into the world of established fanzines, this time we'll take it easy with recent issues of fanzines which have contained **fiction**. A lot of snide comments have been levelled at the quality of fanzines fiction in the past, but recently there has been a marked improvement, and many zines are now notable *because* of their fiction. However, let's do the latest releases first.

On to fiction now. We had better point out that, with one exception, these are *not* fiction zines and contain other material, and thus you shouldn't expect too much from them.

ONGOING EDITIONS!

PANDEMONIUM is the latest incarnation of *DEMON ISSUE* and #9 contains quite a lengthy piece of fiction by the editor. A sound plot and written with a certain inimitable style makes it a very nice read, destined to help fill a yawning gap for all those SF-starved fans. All round the zine is impressive, the only real complaint being the standard of presentation. Definitely worth getting (and it's *not* all SF!).

THE IMPALER is a somewhat different fanzine, which has now ceased to cover gaming. #7 contains an excellent piece of fiction based on Stephen King's *CHRISTINE*. It's very well written and the author has sensibly got permission from both Stephen King and NEL Books. What's more, it's to continue in #8! But word out on the street is that *THE IMPALER* has now folded, so there won't be an issue #8...

SAURON STRIKES BACK is the rather dubious title of what can only be called a rather dubious zine. The editor aims simply to cover as many games as possible. Issue #1 contained scenarios for CoC and Judge Dredd, and an 'article' for AD&D, as well as a piece of 'Lovecraftian fiction', stretching to all of one page. If it interests you...

ANGELA is a personalzine produced by somebody who has been in fandom quite a while (and even been respected at times!). It's short and cheap, and mainly concerns itself with running a few postal games, with a few reviews of Superhero RPGs thrown in. If you are thinking about getting an SHRPG, then ANGELA will probably be a lot of help, if not there is little else to read, but what there is, you may find interesting...

Coming in at a whopping 88 pages is **TALES AFTER DARK** #2, probably the best zine to get if you are looking for fiction of the horrific kind. In fact the purpose of the thing seems to be to scare its readers out of everything except mind, and it does so with venom. There are no less than six stories, accompanied by four poems, and a piece of non-fiction which asks, "Why The Mythos?" A definite must if you enjoy horror.

HARVEST TIME #3 has finally appeared, and it has again shifted more towards wargaming. However, one notable part of it is the beginning of a fiction series called 'Pilgrimage', which is thoroughly enjoyable, with a nice plot and well written characters. All round it makes good reading, and its length (four pages) helps. The subject is three minstrels who are really secret agents, in a fantasy world, and something odd is going to happen in Mihil Ap Igue...

INTO THE DARKNESS is a good first issue, though the editor's decision to produce a zine similar in many ways to *SACRIFICING THE GOAT* has meant that he has something to build on. Various contents, a chatty style, lots of campaign material (both discursive and based upon the editor's own campaign), figure and game reviews, and fiction, all combine to create a nice first issue. It looks quite smart and could do well, but lacks originality. One to look out for in the future.

THUNDERWIND 4 continues a series recounting the experiences of 'Shadrac Stone - Starhunter' which appears to be about a character who is a bounty hunter in the future, somewhat reminiscent of 'Bladerunner'. It reads very well and is longer than average (5 pages), meaning that you feel like you've actually read something, compared to most fanzine stories which tend to be just one or two pages. *THUNDERWIND* as a zine appears to have improved a lot as well, though the attitudes of the editors is still somewhat..erm..doubtful. Good story.

EYE CATCHERS!

Enough fiction, here are the zines which caught our eye recently.

SACRIFICING THE GOAT , is now on #4 and is very smart. This issue contains only two stories, less than usual, but they're both good. One takes place in a 1984 type set- ting and is called 'The Perfect Society', whilst the other is all about somebody who goes just a bit too far with a video game (?). Nice fiction, if a little short.

Also worth having a look at is **IMAZINE 16**, which on top of all the gaming articles and the Cthulhu scenarios, has an interview with Bryan Ansell, Managing Director of a certain games firm. The interview is very interesting and provides a lot of information about how Games Workshop operate, and their plans for the future.

Something to look out for in the near future is **SLAVE OF FANDOM**, a new fanzine, The purpose of which is to review all the other current RPG fanzines. This will provide comprehensive details of all the fanzines around today, and so if you are looking for coverage of a certain topic, or for a few zines to subscribe to, then this zine should be very useful. The fact that we are both in the production team has nothing whatsoever to do with it being great though, not at all...

DAUGHTER OF DOOL is another name change for the previously titled "Once in a Lifetime' and "Vernons Odyssey". This zine takes its fiction very seriously, and this issue has three **short** stories, none of which present anything particularly radical. The zine has come a long way from issue 1 (this is #3) but still fails to provide a satisfying read, due to its short length and lack of content. Something of interest being organised by the editor is a collection of stories written by members of fandom, be they editor or readers, to be published in a special fanzine. If you feel like you would like to contribute a story, or would like to know more, why not get in touch? Proceeds of the collection will go to Oxfam.

WHAT'S STIRRING? is the name of a new 'fanzine' produced by a new game company, The Laboratory. Issue 0 is **FREE** (for an SAE), and sports a glossy two-colour cover, and is very neatly produced. Inside there is an introduction to the team, back- ground on their PBM, and an outline of their future plans. The writing style is somewhat weird, to say the least, but when it's free, you can't go wrong. By the time you read this issue 1 will be out, and this will contain a 16 page AD&D competition module, as well as a variety of features, including a prize competition. *WHAT'S STIRRING* is looking like it will fill the gap between prozine and fanzine, and The Laboratory are looking for a 5000 circulation.

Oh, and dare we mention that **UTTER DRIVEL 6**, now out, contains an interview with top rock group SAXON? Not to mention it being a Time Travel Special...

The **ADVENTURER ZINE PACK** aims to introduce people to some of the better fanzines around at the moment, so that they get a taste of what fanzines can offer. This pack is not designed to be a cheap way of getting fanzines, but as a service we offer to people who would like to get a couple of fanzines, but haven't a clue which ones to get. In the pack you get five of the best fanzines around, and an introduction to them and fandom. If you are interested, send cheque/PO for £2.80 made payable to BEN GOODALE, at the relevant address.

RELEVANT ADDRESSES

Alex Bardy, 28b Gladsmuir Rd, Archway, London, N19 3JX (Editor of CEREBRETRON #2 out now @ 60p + SAE - SFRPG/SF & Editor of EH?, #8 out now @40p PBM/Chat).

Ben Goodale, Cairnmore, Crianlarich, Perthshire, FK20 8QS (Editor of UTTER DRIVEL, #6 now out @ 70p FRP/Chat).

INTO THE DARKNESS: Nick Price, 45 Sutherland Crescent, Blythe Bridge, Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9JT (60p, 40 A5pp).

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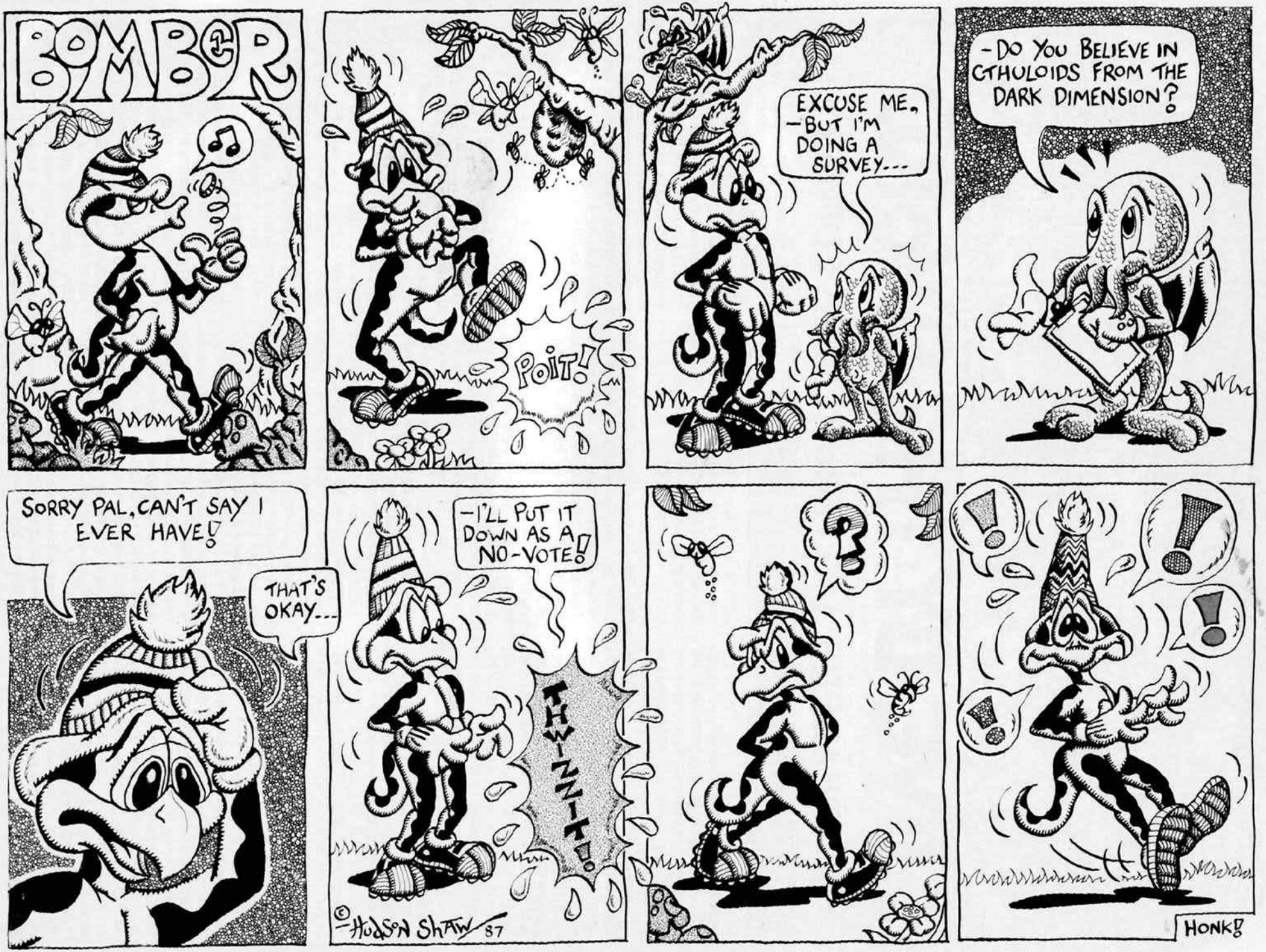
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THWINK!
?
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LIVE BY THE SWORD

READERS' LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please address all letters to: LIVE BY THE SWORD, ADVENTURER, 85 Victoria Street, Liverpool L1 6DG.

Women In Roleplaying seems to be causing the biggest stir in Adventurer readers than anything else at the moment, which makes me wonder about the personality of the fantasy games market, particularly when I receive comments like the following:

CHRIS HUNT, Southall: While I agree with Janet Vialls' suggestion that involving female characters will produce a better game with more depth, I was disappointed with her examples. She suggests that fantasy need not be a man's world, but then proceeds to suggest roles for women within a completely male-dominated framework **(until this issue- ed.)**. Moreover, why is it that the roles she suggests for women are nearly all power-hungry psycopaths like Livia. The roles she suggests are the same stereotyped roles which men traditionally seek... The problem with Janet's article is that she concentrates on traditional fantasy societies. What about inventing a society where power seekers are truly despised and humour is used to keep government in check? I don't want to knock Janet's article, because the real problem is that the task of creating alternative roles for women is impossible because the games on the market at the moment are about worlds where women traditionally have no part to play except as bedding material. When it boils down to it, the worlds on offer are not about people, but about power. Characters are only interesting in terms of how powerful they are. Who cares whether they are women, men or monkeys? Only when a game comes along which offers different objectives will it be possible to treat women (and men) in a different way. In the mean time, we are left with making the best of a bad job. It's good to see material like Janet's.

▼

DOUGLAS THOMSON, Turriff: This very controversial area of FRP is one which requires a great deal of discussion. Personally, I would like to see a lot more females take part in role-playing, but many don't seem to be interested. I am about to start a game of WHFRP with two female players in the group, and I'm sure I'll let them read this article to see what an active female role-player thinks of the situation.

▼

SIMON NICHOLSON, Slough: Janet's references to orcs are interesting: it should be remembered that **Tolkien's** orcs were originally elves, corrupted mentally and physically by **Melkor**. Perhaps they also have extreme life-spans: they would not be able to leave Middle-Earth for the west, however; hence their hatred of elves-- they are envious. Expanding on Janet's argument, it would be impossible to distinguish male orcs from females unless you are an orc yourself!

There is a message here. Tolkien's world was calculated, rationalised: the eco-system was plausible. RPGs like D&D simply grabbed the basic components of the world, without the structure of Middle-Earth (to avoid copyright problems and also to provide what was thought to be a generic system). Thus we have AD&D orcs who are inherently evil for no apparent reason. And we ALSO have goblins, despite the fact that Tolkien's goblins were orcs under a different name (they are only called goblins in **The Hobbit**).

DAVE MORRIS, London: The FRP sexism thing involves rather more than how women are treated in game settings. It is the portrayal of women as objects to drool over that is objectionable, and where this occurs (figurines and game + book covers), it undoubtedly turns a lot of women off the idea. (Remember the absurd "chainmail bikini" version of the RQ2 cover that was used in the UK?) If a game world is one where women are getting a raw deal, or where one race is lording it over another, than that's really just one more challenge for the players to have to cope with.

▼

DAVE HALLETT, University College, Oxford: I have a small postscript to add concerning the question raised on the reproduction of Harpies, Medusae, et. al. This very question occured to me some years ago, and for one particular case it seems to me the answer is self-evident. Why else should Harpies have a **Charm** ability but to make use of human males? You can always eat them later. Presumably only **female** young are Harpies. Males are probably eaten. All pretty tasteless, I admit, but really very logical, don't you think?

What? Logic in role-playing games? You'll be asking us to provide rationalisation for fantastic things such as shape-changing next!

▼

SIMON NICHOLSON: Neil Grant's comments (LBTS#7) on metamorphosis show a distinct lack of physical knowledge. Does he really understand $E=MC^2$? Energy and matter are different forms of the same thing, on a ratio c^2:1! If Dracula lost sufficient mass to become a bat, he would lose 6×10^{18} joules of energy-- about the equivalent of a 1500

Megaton explosion! Enough to obliterate the United Kingdom... I think this line of pseudo-scientific rationalisation should be left alone, eh? Just tell your players it's magic-- then get 'em to make SAN rolls...

▼

JAMES COCKBURN, Surbiton, Surrey: Let us suppose an average human weight of 11 stone, or 70Kg.

Assume an average Bat weight of 2 Kgs.

This means 68 Kg. must be released as heat. Using $E=MC^2$ with M=68Kg. and

$c = 299792548\ ms^{-1}$:-

This gives: $E = 68 \times (299792458)^2$

$E = 6.11 \times 10^{18}$ Joules.

$E = 1.7 \times 10^{12}$ KWH

In 1974, the world energy used was 2.24×10^{20} Joules.

This means one transformation to bat form would supply 1/50th. of today's world energy requirement, give or take a few KW.

Put another way, the temperature in the bat and its immediate surroundings would rise from c. 20°C

to 730,000,000,000,020°C

This would be far more efficient at removing vampires than crucifixes and holy water. It would also have unfortunate effects on fantasy cities, quite similar to a thermonuclear device!

The sudden temperature drop going the other way would lower the temperature to absolute zero and have equally devastating effects.

When dealing with fantasy, it is far more sensible to use explanations such as magic making a 12 stone bat fly, than to use science and arrive at a completely ludicrous result such as the thermonuclear vampire!

Yes, I think I prefer my explanation for lycanthropy as well! And now, onto Mr. controversial:-

▼

KEVIN HASSALL, Sevenoaks, Kent: Let me make myself clear here! I am not a satanist Aztec Nazi! My point is, (see LBTS# 5, 6 and 7!) if I may clarify it, this: There is no **absolute** morality, and evil is a purely **subjective** concept.

The Vietnam war caused massive slaughter and insanity, as did the first World War, as did the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. But apparently logical justifications have been made for all of them. I do not accept these justifications-- I believe the Aryan myth is just that- a myth. And I can't accept that halting the spread of communism or German power justified such bloodshed- but I can **SEE** others' points of view, even though I reject them.

I could give considerable evidence that Americans are "evil" (Hiroshima, Vietnam, etc.) but I don't really think that they are! The CoC rulebook gives no evidence at all to support the comment that Shudde M'ell is "evil", so why should I believe it? Only descriptions of Nyarlathotep's sadism is half-way convincing in terms of proving his evilness. Most references to the gods' nastiness revolve around the word 'diabolic':-

"of or pertaining to, The Devil".

Essentially, this means that these gods are the **antithesis** of christianity. Being anti- Christian may be sufficient damming evidence for Christian fundamentalists like Mr. Bradbury, but not for me. I have met several atheists who are vehemently anti-Christianity, but they aren't "evil" at all! What, if anything, is proven by the unsubstantiated statements in the rulebook?

▼

SIMON NICHOLSON: Religion for Call of Cthulhu PCs: For a start, I can see many people being offended when their religion is translated into "game terms"-- especially when Robert Blinkhorn attempts to give rules for "religious abilities"... He also fails to realise that the basic premise of Lovecraft's Mythos is that God, Allah, and so on just do not exist! Man is totally alone: there is no heaven or hell, no afterlife, no saviour. Nothing but oblivion. Man is cosmically insignificant, as are his concepts of good and evil. That's what makes the whole game so frightening... It might be interesting to see how a religious character comes to terms with the knowledge that he or she is without god, in a completely materialistic universe where humanity means nothing.

Mr. Blinkhorn ALSO makes the mistake, like many, of thinking that Buddha is a god. On the contrary, he was very much a man. Buddhism does not hold with god as a benevolent Saviour. One is All: All is One. It's actually very interesting, but unfortunately has nothing to do with rolegames, so I'll stop...

▼

KEVIN HASSALL: I doubt that I am alone when I say that I was very annoyed and a little insulted by Robert Blinkhorn's attitude to religion. We do not live in Glorantha or Greyhawk: God (Allah, Christ, Brahma, Buddha, etc.) does not distribute Rune magic or magic items. Religions which offer aid offer it abstractly, not as a 'mind shield' or Hollywood style exorcist ability. They have philosophies, and codes of conduct and morality which are all-important- Robert ignores them.

The "Holy water" bit merely reduces the church to the level of a D&D alchemist's guild, producing potions to fight 'nasties' with. Islam, which promises that "Allah has power to grant...victory" (Koran 22:40) offers, according to Robert "little or no help". Of the Buddhist and Hindu philosophies, only some sort of daft Oracular power and a SAN roll bonus remain. Of course, the SAN roll bonus is useful in game terms, but it's a gimmick, and a sacreligious one at that. So you want a Buddhist monk PC? OK, but what Robert didn't mention is that he won't be able to accept any money, and must be a celibate, tea-total, vegetarian pacifist!

If I may enter the foray at this point, Kevin- you must remember that Robert's article was an attempt to abstract religious benefits to game terms. Just as in FRP games, the benefits of years of magical study are represented by a quick 'mind meld' spell and a roll of the dice, so in CoC, religious study, discipline and faith may be rewarded with gifts. What of the Pentecostal gifts of 'speaking in tongues', or of healing, or of the countless 'miracles' that devout men have been reported as performing? True, religious characters should strictly adhere to a religious life-style, but isn't that true of the Runequest Priest or the D&D cleric? Providing that limitations and restrictions on their lifestyle (and adventuring opportunity) are adopted, I see no reason why 'magical' benefits cannot be incorporated to provide a more balanced game.

▼

E. J. LEACH, Cambs: To Dale Jenkins (LBTS #6):-

"Vi estas la plej inteligenta viro en la mondo, se vi povas paroli Esperante! Vi estas prava! "Adventurer," esperante!"

But seriously, I wonder how many readers speak Esperanto. Any ideas, anyone?

I don't get many requests from people wanting scenarios written in Esperanto, but I do get the occasional missive about wargames:-

▼

JOSEPH VALE, Lancaster: As a spate of wargaming RPGs seems to be coming, why has no-one devised a WW2 RPG, or may this prove to be tasteless? If so, no more tasteless than 'Revised Recon'. And does anyone cover 'Twilight 2000' apart from Challenge? If Adventurer were to cover an adventure, I'm sure the minority who play it would be most grateful.

▼

JOHN TREADAWAY, London: It's a common misconception held by many inexperienced wargamers and role-players that there is little in common between the two styles of play. Good wargames are role playing under another name anyway- a General (PC) attempts to keep in line an army (large group of NPCs) in a combat situation. I must admit that in the 12 years I've been wargaming (and 9 or 10 that I've been RPing), the number of times this crossover has been apparent has... well, let's just say that it's not as often as it should be. It **does** exist, and is occasionally being exploited (witness Battle System and Warhammer). Just touching on a point here; there is table top fantasy wargaming beyond Warhammer, you know! I think **Adventurer** is in a strong position here to encourage some articles in the middle ground. Obvious examples would be articles based around **Battletech**, or perhaps single ship-to-ship **Star Trek** games; I was thinking specifically of the system in the original STRPG that allowed half a dozen people to role-play the bridge crew of a

star ship in combat. Any gamer who narrows his or her mind to leave only one sort of gaming is doing themselves a large disservice.

▼

R.G. LOWE, Aberdeen: Re: the two new TSR books, I find the modification to the 'falling damage rule' (PHB p. 105) so vexing... I have presented a table below to show the relationship between distance fallen and the velocity of the falling object. Using the basic equations $v=u+at$ and $s= ut+ {}^1/_2 at^2$, assuming $a=9.81$ m/second:-

distance fallen (')	velocity (feet/sec)	--- damage: --- PHB:	DSG:
10	**25.4**	**1d6**	**1d6**
20	**35.9**	**2d6**	**3d6**
30	**43.9**	**3d6**	**6d6**
40	**50.7**	**4d6**	**10d6**
50	**56.7**	**5d6**	**15d6**
60	**62.1**	**6d6**	**20d6**

In determining damage from a fall, it is the velocity of the object striking the ground that causes damage, not the distance fallen. Therefore, by the new system, a fall of 40' causes 10 times as much damage as a fall from 10'. However, as can be seen from the table, after a 40' fall, the velocity attained is only twice that for a 10' fall. The old system gives this figure as 4 times the damage for such a fall- still excessive. Also, damage in the new systems 'bottoms out' at 60'. At this point, the object must have assumed to have reached terminal velocity, as damage does not increase with greater distance. This is a total nonsense, as terminal velocity is not reached in the real world until a distance of 240-260' is fallen. The old system flattens out at 200'- wrong again, but minimally in error compared to the gross error perpetrated in the new system. Here is my version:-

Distance fallen (')	Damage:	Distance fallen (')	Damage:
10	**1D6**	**110**	**3D6+1**
20	**1D6+1**	**120**	**3D6+2**
30	**1D6+2**	**130**	**3D6+2**
40	**2D6**	**140**	**3D6+3**
50	**2D6+1**	**150**	**3D6+3**
60	**2D6+2**	**160**	**4D6**
70	**2D6+2**	**170**	**4D6**
80	**2D6+3**	**180**	**4D6+1**
90	**3D6**	**190**	**4D6+1**
100	**3D6+1**	**200-220**	**4D6+2**
		230	**4d6+3**
		240+	**5d6**

These figures are given for an unarmoured character or creature. If armour is worn, the damage inflicted will be increased by the amount given below:

Armour Type worn:	Additional dam.
Leather/ Padded	**1-2**
Studded Leather/ Ring Mail	**1-3**
Scale Mail	**1-4**
Chain Mail/ Elfin Chain	**2-4**
Splint Mail/ Banded Mail	**2-5**
Plate Mail (all types)	**2-5**

These figures do not take into account the 'fear' factor for higher falls. To allow for this, it may be a consideration to increase the damage by 1 hit point for each 10' fallen above the first, ie. +1 for a 20' fall, +2 for a 30' fall, etc.

As a footnote, if the damage scale seems unusual in that an 80' fall causes 5-15 points of damage and a 90' fall causes 3-18 points of damage, for example (ie. less damage can be taken from a higher fall), doubters should be reminded that the average damage from these falls is 10 and 10.5 respectively. That is, on average, the higher the fall, the more the damage.

Also, let me relate the case of a tail gunner in an Avro Lancaster bomber who bailed out without a parachute, high over German territory during WWII, and survived the fall! In the AD&D world, such everyday men possess only 1-6 hit points. Using the DSG system, a fall of only 30' will lead to death very quickly unless a handy passerby is there to render aid immediately. The PHB system will achieve the same result for falls of 60' or more. Neither system would let the tail gunner live. As it happens, both his legs were broken, but he was conscious and lived to tell his tale. Unfortunately, the Germans didn't believe his story, and accused him of spying. The system I have presented would have given him a chance of survival (5-30 points for his fall of over 240'). A very slim chance, as it should be.

▼

IAN PEARSON, Cleveland: I am disappointed at the fall in popularity of Superhero RPGs, or at least in the coverage they get in magazines. I hold you, Adventurer, to remedy this. Even when scenarios have appeared, they have tended to be completely battle-orientated, bland, and not lending to campaign play very well. What we need is a decent campaign background, detailing networks through which villains commit their crimes, and one or two plot ideas. If you can't lower yourself to publish such an article, then how about a page or so on the origins of comics, and reviews, so that we can convert these to game terms.

▼

DAVE KITE, Salisbury: Have you got anything against MSH? You've mentioned (in about 1 line), the Advanced Rules system (#1), Realms of Magic (#3), and Gates of What If (#5), each one with a sarcastic comment. Please change your attitude, and review some of its wide selection of accessories.

▼

OLIVER DICKINSON, York: Aw c'mon! Dry those tears! It is true that so far no scenario pack for RQIII Glorantha has been published, but it is perfectly possible to play RQIII in Glorantha, and only in Glorantha; so it means you have to quietly forget some aspects of favoured characters' previous history, rearrange their spells and abilities a bit, and otherwise adapt; but there need be no basic incompatibility. No one has to include orcs or hobbits.

I take Greg Stafford's comments that RQIII reflects his original conception of Glorantha better, very seriously, and I welcome the changes that make it that much more difficult to become a Runemaster in splendid armour and all that, even though I have griped at the effects of new rules in some respects (Runequest Ruminations in WD #75). One can, as a Glorantha-groupie, feel sad that the link has been weakened in the wish to produce a generally appealing system, but I do know of players who do not wish to play RQ in Glorantha; there's no accounting for tastes. Anyway, it's done now, and I feel that old timers should be able to adapt. If the new rules make it harder to create overmighty PCs and NPCs, that is all to the good, though it does make it harder to cope with some of the monsters in The Big Rubble, for instance. The new version of Griffin Mountain, ie. Griffin Island, does provide a good example of how to adapt powerful characters from one system to the other.

But enough of this. Are your readers interested in hearing more of Griselda and the gang, in fiction or 'reality' (ie. what has happened to them since the Great Chart Caper)?

Thanks for trying to convert me, Oli., but I still think that abandoning RQII was a sell-out! As for Griselda and the gang, most of our readers probably don't know what you're talking about:- or do they? Stay tuned...

▼

PETER & JANET VIALLS, Huntingdon: Beast Market was excellent- Robin Parry can write scenarios as well as cartoons! We are impressed!

▼

DR. C. SARGENT, Willingham: The piccy of our chum Marc G. was a real treat (T.C. #6). More of this sort of thing, please. Have you got the legendary one of Paul C*****n with the rubber duck?

▼

JON FREEMAN, Weymouth: How do your readers feel about fiction in **Adventurer**? I don't mind it, so long as it is good, and doesn't take the place of gaming material. **Haggopian** was an excellent story, but six pages!? Even the most prosaic, writhing tentacles from the abyss can become tiresome. How about a **reader survey** to find out what we really think and want? Please urge your readers, sitting out there complacently in reader-dom, to get off their butts and do something! Shape the future of their hobby, if only by scribbling a few lines like this.

It's funny you should ask about a reader survey; next issue, we have the most detailed, incisive survey this side of the fantasy games universe. We want to know what you want to see, and we mean to find out. The poll will be in the middle, so I expect every single one returned, or I'll send someone from the Church of the White Zone to convert you!

Awaiting replies... Ste Dillon.

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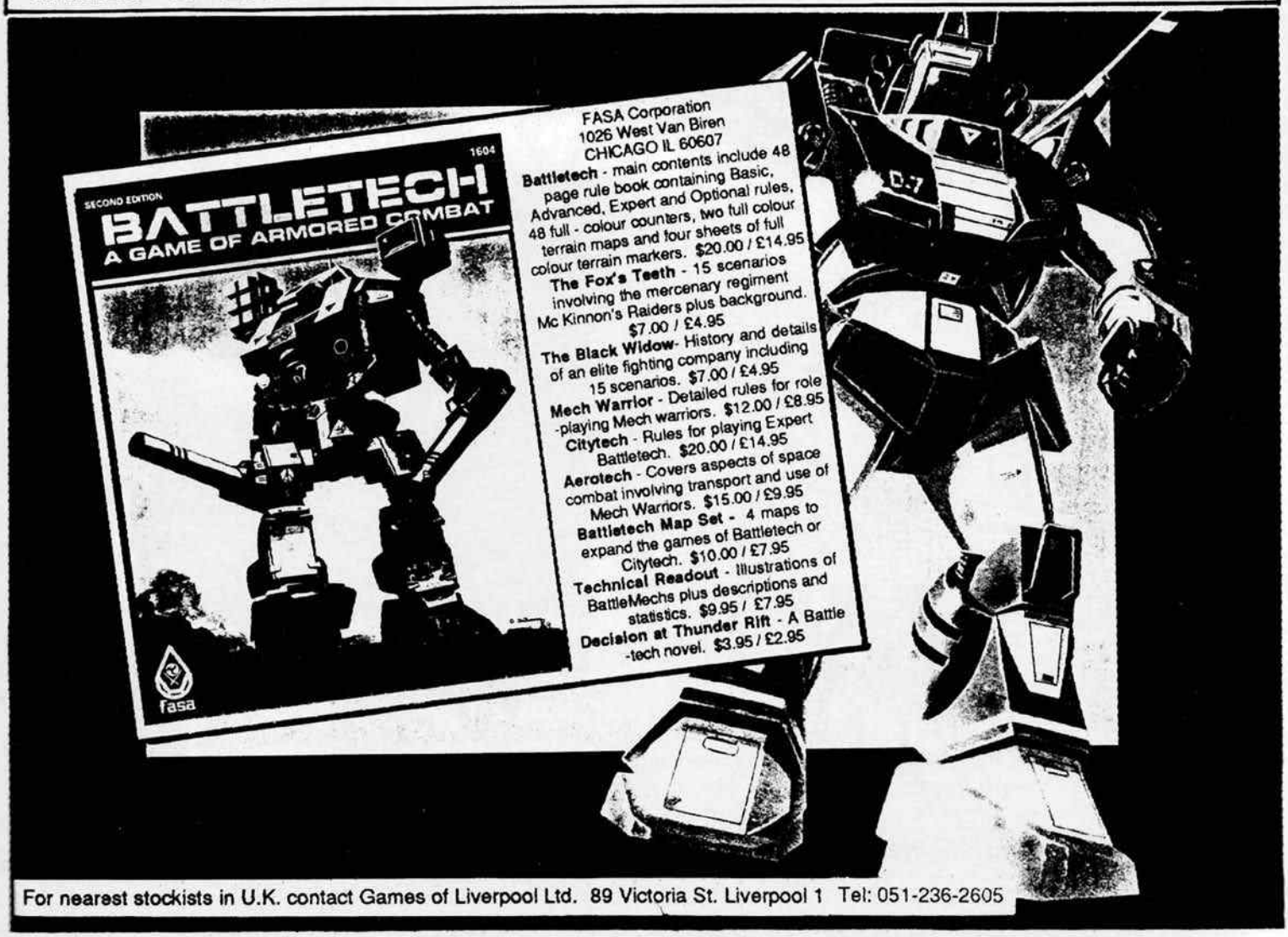
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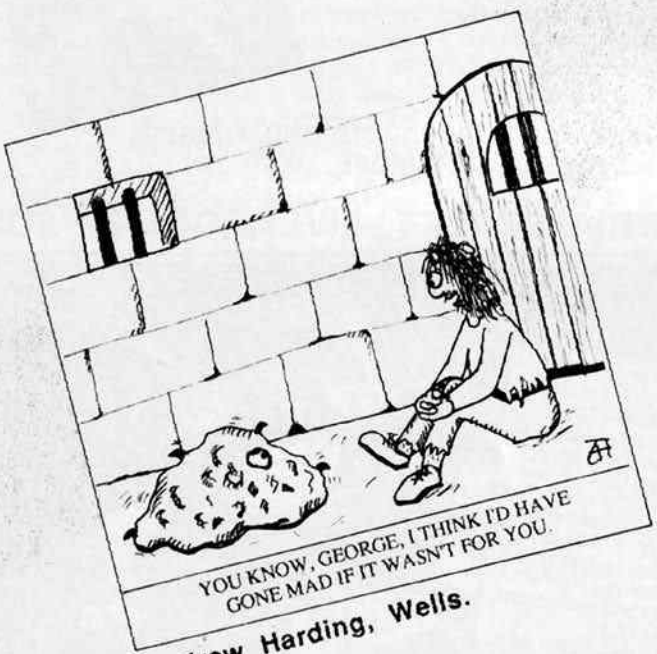
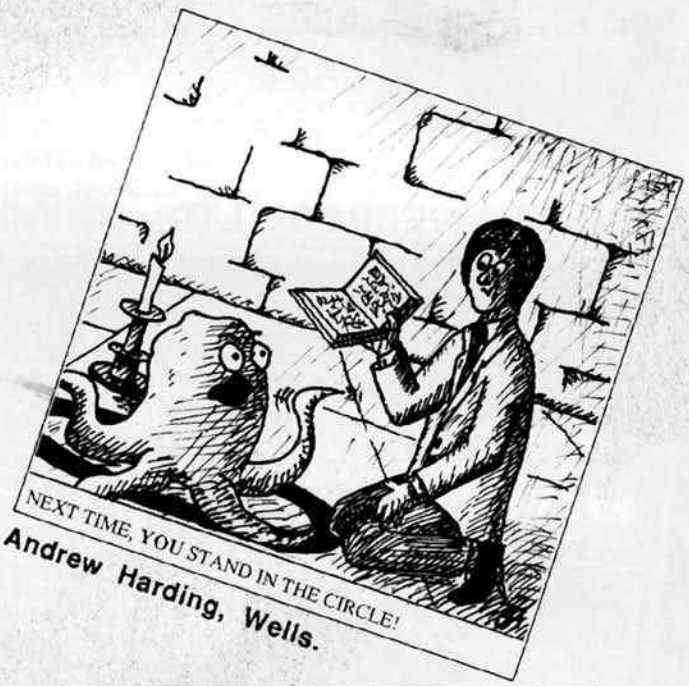
Adventurer Club

COMPETITION RESULTS!

Well, I'm sure glad we held our **Brian Lumley** Cartoon competition in issue 6. Some of your entries were, well, somewhat unlikely ever to see print except in the pages of the **Aber Rag** mag or something. However, we did get some good attempts, and the best of these are shown on these two pages.



Andrew Harding, Wells.



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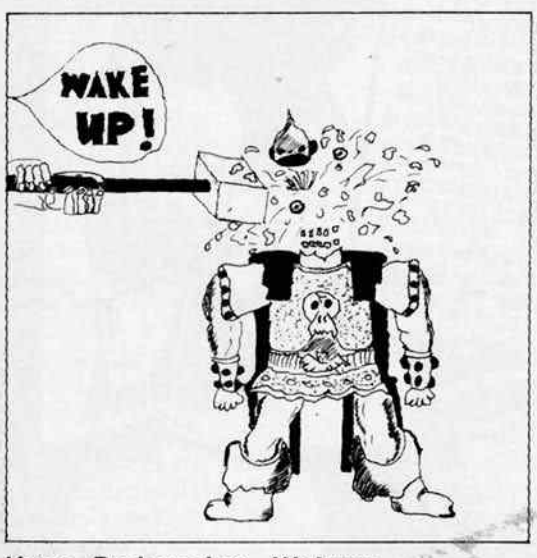
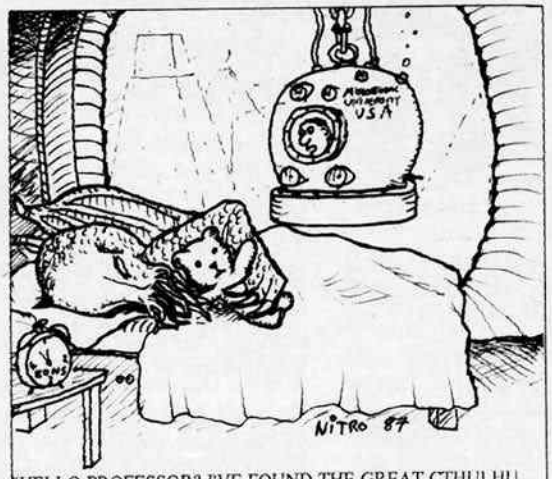
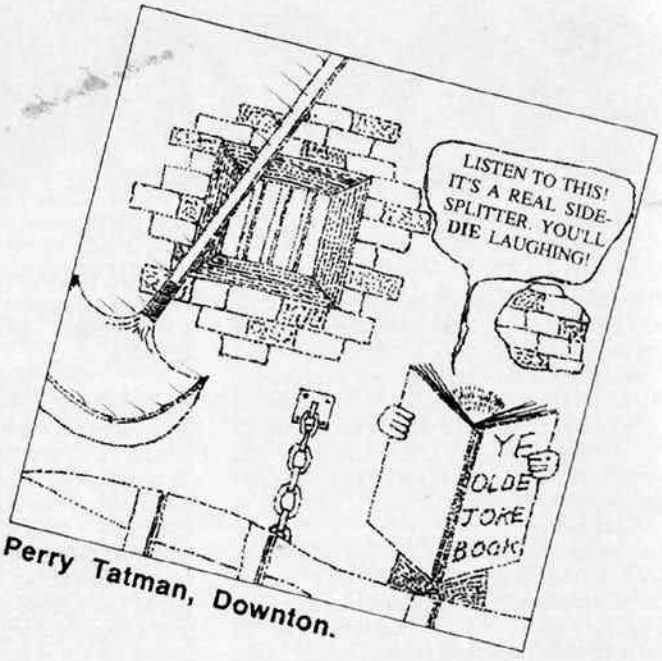


Kane Bedrossian, Welwyn.

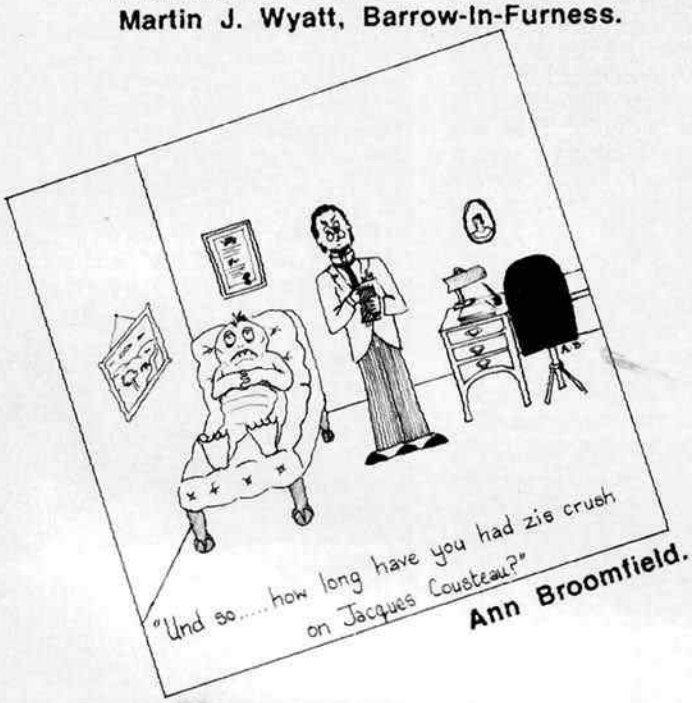
Mark Schofield, Stratford.



Martin J. Wyatt, Barrow-In-Furness.

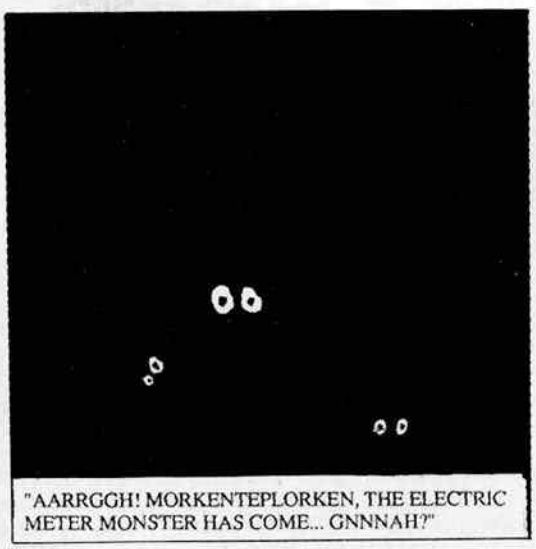


Perry Tatman, Downton.

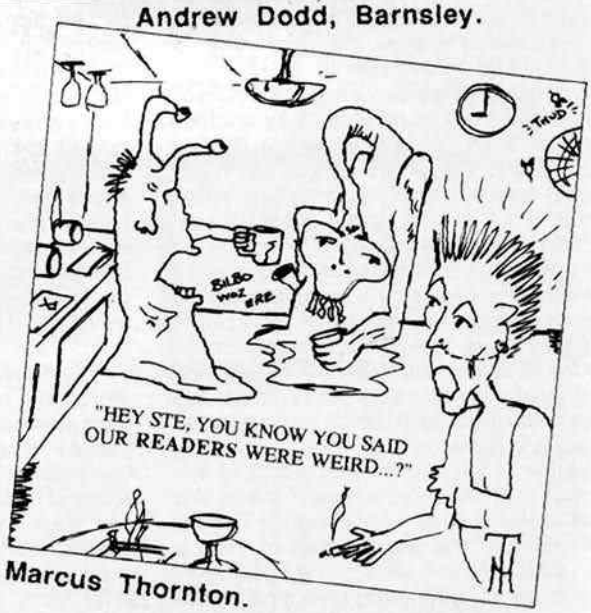


Ann Broomfield.

Andrew Dodd, Barnsley.



Kieren Diment, Amersham.



Marcus Thornton.

1st. Prize goes to **Andrew Harding**, from Wells in Somerset, who sent 3 entries- oops! We didn't place any limit on the number of entries, did we? Still, we all decided that his was the funniest, so a specially signed Deluxe copy of **Brian Lumley's "Hero Of Dreams"** is on its way to you, Andrew. To everyone else who entered, thanks very much and keep trying. The standard was pretty high, as you can see from this selection.

COCOON

by D.Michaels

GM's Notes

This is a scenario for Middle-Earth characters of Level 1-10. It was also intended to be used for Basic D&D, but we have left out all relevant bonuses and weapons modifiers. A (D&D) DM with a good knowledge of Tolkien's books, and an intelligent approach to his/her games should find this a useful and playable scenario. Some reading through and preparation is required, though, to make it easily playable.

The season and climate for this adventure have been deliberately left out, to give the GM more flexibility in inserting this scenario into his/her campaign. It should be noted that the climate is quite cool, thus facilitating the herbs and poisons that are available.

Background information for NPCs is provided at the end of this scenario, though no statistics are provided. The GM can use stats. from suitable existing NPCs, or generate them specifically.

Introduction

You have just arrived at the Inn and, having been greeted by the landlady and shown to your rooms (If you are staying), you are having a drink. Exactly why the players are there is left to the GM's discretion.

The Inn of the Sixth Sense

The Inn is so-called because it was once something akin to a 'rogues gallery', and any adventurers who happened along needed a sixth sense to survive. I've never known so many perception rolls to be made.

It has changed somewhat of late, in that its usual customers are now of **'Calenardhon'** (Rohan) blood. It's because of their presence that the landlady changed the sign outside - *a white horse on a green field.*

A jolly atmosphere can easily be achieved while these warriors drink, as they are fond lovers of song (though some are fighting songs which vaguely resemble our rugby songs), and will encourage singing when visitors grace their doorstep (Orcs, Wargs, etc. are naturally not invited).

The Halflings of **Stoorwich** (pronounced Stor-itch) also contribute a few of their folk to this haven who, besides being fond of the food they serve here, will share their songs with the Rohirrim. Visits from Dwarves are not uncommon, though they don't share the same enthusiasm as Rohirrim when it comes to song and games.

The Inn is located 5 miles south of the **Entwash** at the point where it meets the south-eastern perimeter of **Fangorn Forest**. The Landlady, the widow **Gâelren**, runs a clean establishment- though she does like to flirt with the menfolk - and lives alone, save her only son **Gmaél** (aged 5). Gâelren - a noted cook herself- is now forced to employ two cook/cleaners. This keeps her free to tend the bar, entertain guests, etc...

The lower level of the Inn.

A) The Reception Area - A humble entrance for such a plush place, it is empty except for a coat stand, and is illuminated by lanterns. The main door faces south, opposite which is a large staircase, leading up to the guest rooms, and staff/landlady's living quarters.

B) The Dining Room - A small but nicely decorated room, with furniture (including 4 tables, 12 chairs) consisting of woven basket. Its tidiness does justice to its cleanliness, with everything in its right place, both on and off the table. One would instinctively expect good food judging from the overall impression of the room alone. There are menus on each table, listing one or two rare dishes, which might suggest the cook is not human. In spite of this attractive room, most diners choose to eat their meals in the Bar Area. Their is a cupboard-type dumb-waiter along the eastern wall of here, with a **Light** +10 lock. Opening it will reveal a full set (12 piece) of silver cutlery (worth about 10-100sp). There is also a piece of parchment, on which is written in **Sindarin**, 1 keg cider; 2 kegs mead; 1 keg wine; etc. etc. This is an old inventory of Gâelren's.

A large open fire burns in the marble fireplace at the far end of the room. A door north of here for staff only leads to the Kitchen.

C) The Kitchen - A rather large room for a kitchen, with an equally large well stocked pantry. The pantry is full of food with a **Easy** +20 lock on it. The kitchen has a huge burner at one end, a bronze-hooded roasting pit, a basin (complete with taps), utensil racks, large table, and a cabinet containing a set of earthenware dishes.

D) The Bar Area - A huge marble fireplace adorns this room, and more often than not, someone is seated by it. The bar itself is a buffet style, from behind which ale is scooped from the huge, traditional open cask. This is indeed the largest of the rooms in the building, with eight tables, eight long benches and a half dozen high backed chairs. At present, there is a chest behind the bar, with an **Extremely Hard** -30 lock on it. This contains payment for the ale seller (250gp), who is due today, and will be given to him on arrival.

E) The News Room - A favoured room for all rumour mongers, and meetings. This room also acts as a games room. Four men occupy it at the moment. There are bookshelves on two of the walls, containing books of middle-earth history, folklore, legend and languages. If a PC sits up all night reading, the GM might award him a couple of experience points. There is nothing of value in the room.

F) The Stables - An anvil outside is used by the smithy, should any members of the party wish their horses shoeing. As he is never around when you want him, it is suggested that you place your request with Gâelren. There is a tin box in the stable with no lock on - this holds 7sp & 6cp - and Gâelren will advise the party that it is for 'tips' for the smithy. Gâelren actually does the 'smithying' herself.

A large whip hangs on the back of the door. At present there are four light horses; one Mearas, and seven large horses.

G) The Washroom - This is adjoined to the stables, and contains one large vat (full of water), one toilet, one wash basin, and a wooden tub. The vat has two outlets, one for the tub and one for the toilet. Opening the toilet outlet valve will allow sufficient pressure to flush it. There are no charges for the use of these facilities, so don't expect someone to draw you hot water (and no-one has left their soap behind for you to steal).

The upper level of the Inn

1) Gâelren's Room - The door has a **Very Hard** -20 lock on it, and is always kept locked when the room is vacant. Inside, there is one large bed (which Gâelren shares with her son Gmaêl), a dresser, wash basin, a chair and the personal effects of both Gâelren and her son. Close investigation will reveal an ink bottle, quills, parchment and a bottle of invisible ink (for keeping personal records) on Gâelren's dresser. There is a book on Gâelren's chair, this is a **Gideon's Bible** (only joking, it's actually an accounts book). Her dresser does have a chest in it which has an **Extremely Hard** -30 lock on it. The chest measures 18" x 12" x 8", and contains a variety of jewels including; a jewel encrusted necklace (5-50sp), a gold bracelet (2-10sp), and some coins (40gp; 500sp).

There is also a **Dagger** with a **+2 spell adder** in the bottom drawer, and a cloak hanging up behind the door which holds a **Daily 1 non-entity spell**. This is an 8th level spell. It not only renders the wearer invisible, but also non detectable. It's range is 'self' and its duration is for 2 rnd/lvl. It is up to the GM to decide on the difficulty of detecting the cloak's qualities.

There is a 60% chance of Gmaél being in this room at any given time. The rest of his time is spent wandering around the premises. He is not allowed outside unaccompanied.

2-3 & 5-11) Guest Rooms - These rooms contain a Bed, one chair, pillow, sheet, and blanket. Anything else found in these rooms is probably still alive, namely drunks.

4) Gorin & Ramon's Room - This room has a **Medium** +0 lock on its door and contains one large bed (for Gorin & Ramon), a dresser, wash basin, a chair and personal effects. Among these PEs are; an axe, a mace (both of which are kept next to the dresser), a chest with a **Very Hard** -20 Lock (under the bed, at the head) containing a brooch (1-10sp), another chest (naturally smaller - and with 56gp 25sp in it). The Latter chest has a **Hard** -10 lock to it. Talk about paranoid!

"What a people you dwarves are for hiding things."

12) Guest Room - This room is reserved for **Romill** on delivery days. He likes looking out over the stables, so he can keep an eye on his mule and wagon.

13) Stairs - These are located in the south hall section, and descend into the reception area.

14) The East Hall - At the northernmost end of this hall, there is a panel on the inside wall (west). This leads to the attic. There is no big secret, Gâelren should show guests this

panel when they check in, in case of emergency.

15) The West Hall - At the northernmost end of this hall, there is a panel on the inside wall (east). This leads to the attic, like the one in the East Hall.

16) The South Hall - This is occupied by the staircase leading down to the reception area.

The Attic - This is actually no more than a storage room for old furniture, Gâelren's husband's belongings, personal memorabilia, etc. The attic looks out north, and there are two panels in the northernmost ends of the east and west walls. These lead through to the east and west hallways of the upper level (first floor) accomodation. **Crebain** often stop here, whilst in and out of Fangorn Forest.

The courtyard is directly below the attic, and a carefully placed ladder connects the two.

Crebain are habitual hoarders of trinkets and other bright objects. The GM may wish to give the players some small finds. However, Crebain are also noted for their eyesight, and from the nearby forest, there is a 10% chance of one spotting someone who enters or exits the attic via the ladder. Each time this action occurs, their chance is increased by 5%.

Service With A Smile

Gâelren's services include normal food and lodging at abnormal prices. The food & drink menu is unusually priced at half normal costs, while lodging is at one and a half normal cost, and is only in the form of **Good** lodging.

I'd say there's definitely method in this lady's madness - cheap drinks encourage people to stay long enough to be forced into staying overnight. She still profits on her ale (a little), and money soon passes hands (via room charges).

Apart from these luxuries, Gâelren has 4 Light Horses in her stables which sell at normal rates.

At some point this evening, **Romili** 'The ale seller' should arrive, with a delivery of the Inn's normal provisions. The time of arrival of the 'ale wagon' is entirely up to the GM, though keep in mind he may have other stops to make and there is the possibility of orcs, wargs and things wandering these lands at night. This should also help to set the time of day for the adventure, which again the GM should decide upon once he/she has read the scenario through.

Any PC wanting to buy accessories will be told to see Romili, 'cause there aren't any on the premises. A perceptive PC may notice a reed hanging from Romili's neck, which may be recognised as a whistle of some sort. (**GM:** This is used to summon his bird familiar when out of telepathic reach).

Neither Romili nor Gâelren stock weapons, armour, potions or poisons (though Gâelren does stock **Murquels**, and Pipe-weed for anyone wishing to become Hobbit-ised (half ounce 2tp). Anyone curious as to why no one elaborates on pipe-weed, should rest assured that, though hobbits claim it to be a stimulant (equal to that of ale - but cheaper), and that it is milder (though somewhat drier) than human pipe tobacco, it has a profound taste that is **not** to a non-hobbit's liking.

***Note:** Murquels (pronounced murkles) are a **dwarven** delicacy, which resemble that of 'beef jerky' (in appearance only), and are primarily made from compressed fish heads.*

Romili might be persuaded to stay the course of the night, Gâelren offering him a room (free, of course, though the other guests shouldn't know) and the stable for his mule and wagon. You never know, the wagon might come in handy, or the party may elect to steal something from it, taking into account that one of the NPCs might get suspicious of a stranger wandering around outside, even if he is 'answering a call of nature'.

Should characters wander into the news room, they will see four men sat around a table, possibly having already heard them mumbling from outside. A successful attempt to listen would reveal that they are just about to set up a game of cards and were debating the stakes involved. Otherwise, the PCs might naturally assume they have disturbed a conference of some sort.

A pot-boy '**Guido**' is also employed, to tend tables (actually a forty-three year old male hobbit, whose real name is unknown- Guido is a nickname given to him by Gâelren because of his fascination for fires - 'Guido Fawkes' from a human tale Gâelren has heard of).

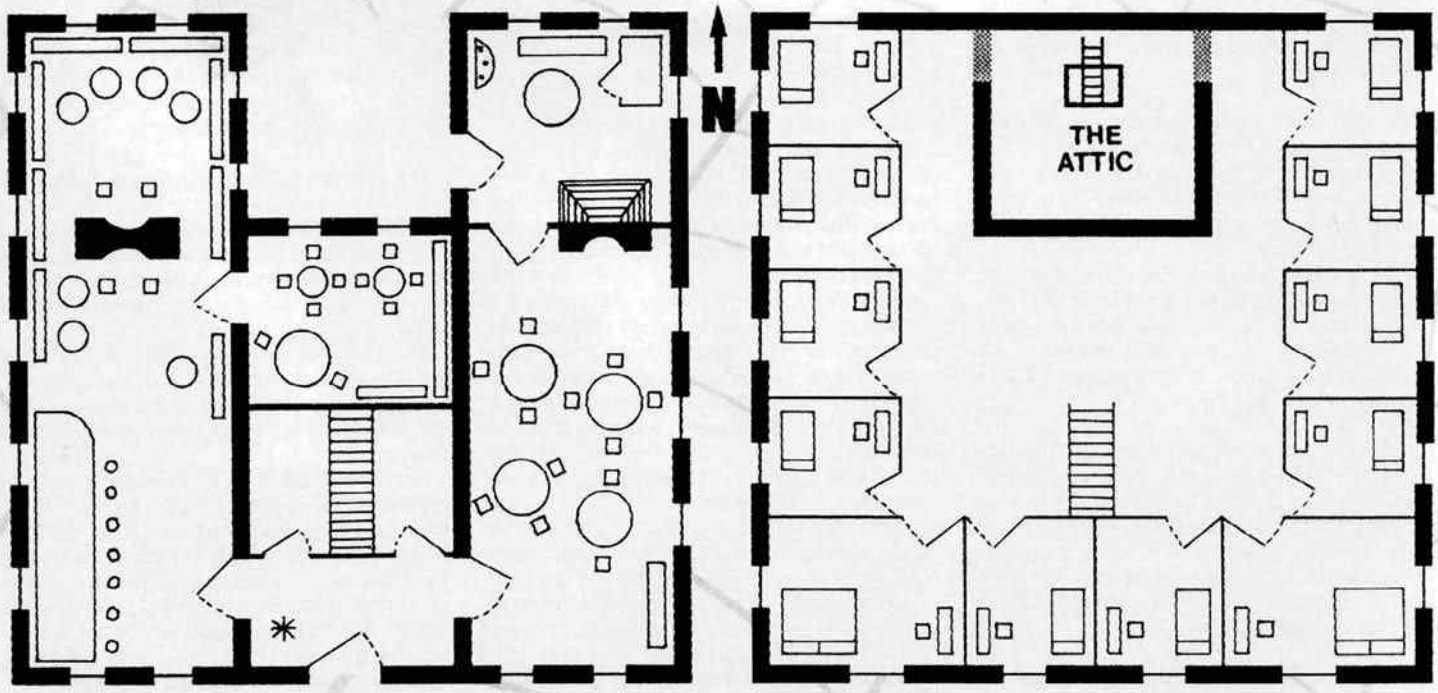
Guido will suggest that his village has any herbs or potions that the party might need, and are normally quite willing to part with them (at a price), though he doesn't think they would take too kindly to any strangers dropping in at this time of night. He will also advise them of the types of herbs, etc. that might be available in this locale, if asked. The GM should take note of these herbs, so that he may estimate the difficulty in finding them, should the party wish to **search** the area. Refer to cost should the party purchase any from the village.

Guido "ain't no use a runnin" is a fun loving character, though somewhat mischevious. He does tempt fate at times, not just with his fire starting, but with his 'light fingers' when playing cards or other such games of chance.

He would literally 'take the shirt off your back' with his cheating, and his shirt (which **he** never takes of **his** back) only adds fuel to the flame:- The shirt Guido adorns, which he stole from a troll lair during an escape, aided by the valiant Rohirrim (who have come to love Guido as much as anyone **could** love the deceitful little scoundrel), has strange magnetic qualities, to a point where it will attract any metal (to a weight not exceeding 2lb) within a six inch radius, and hold it, for as long as the wearer concentrates. This proves very useful to Guido when leaning over tables, after making sure there are no tankards of ale, swords, knives etc. within range.

Guido's shirt has magical properties. The buttons are charged with a Lvl 4 **'Wall of Fire'** (elemental) spell, which enables the caster to create an opaque wall of fire of up to 10'x10'x6" (providing one end rests on a solid surface). Anyone passing through takes a "A" heat critical (no RR). Just as well the little fire bug doesn't know of its true properties.

The shirt is known in dwarf and elven legend, though no-one knows of its whereabouts. It is believed to have been made for **Vairê-** by **Aulë** (Mahal) - in mockery of her status among the Valar 'The Weaver of Fate'. The jest was that though the shirt has indeed a powerful spell charged into its buttons, its magnetic properties (though useful), will attract any metal aimed at it,



knives, swords, arrows, etc., thus giving fate a helping hand (+5 to opponents' OB in melee/missile attacks when using metal weapons). In retaliation to this gesture, Vairë is supposed to have wished this shirt onto Aulë's creations (The dwarves. Again in jest, since she knew dwarves not to be the wizardly type). If so, this would explain the shirt getting into the hands of the trolls - but not why they didn't eat the dwarf: shirt-and-all.

After serving the party, Guido should hint that it is normal procedure for customers to tip the bottle-boy (perhaps standing there with one hand open), and will attempt to use his magnetic shirt on anyone who leaves money on the table, especially if he doesn't receive a tip for his services.

Whether Guido receives a tip or not, he is likely to tempt the players with a private game of cards. He prefers a fair game to the one currently underway in the news room. If agreed, the PCs will be the 'game', and Guido will resort to his 'slight of hand' talents. The NPCs in the news-room are more than wise to Guido's gimmicks, and if the PCs prefer to join in, it **would** turn out to be a fair game.

When caught using his shirt by regular customers of the Inn, they normally treat it as a mischevious jest and mock his feeble attempts of trickery. In retaliation, Guido makes idle threats with the powers of the shirt, insisting that it was handed down from the gods (which no one truly believes, including himself; hocus pocus nonsense), and that it has the power to incinerate people at the will of the wearer!

NB. All Static & Moving maneuver rolls for Guido and the party should be modified in combat, depending on the amount of ale they have imbibed.

Should the party's reaction be hostile towards Guido, one or more of the Inn's regulars may intervene.

Gmaêl - Gâelren's son - was conceived only days before the death of Gâelren's husband who, it would appear, had merely given up the will to live, as if he were elven.

Guido might pass a 3rd-hand rumour that the true father of Gmaêl is **Rhûlon** (A Rohirr ranger and close friend of Gâelren). He will of course whisper this, since Rhûlon is present at the Inn, and his attentions might be drawn to the subject should it be brought up, especially if he elaborates on the subject, (which Guido is fond of doing, if only to tease anyone listening).

Sat with Rhûlon are three warriors **Aêlrer, Ébneor** and **Roêmer** (all Rohirrim). The observant PC might notice 4 shields by the door, three of which bear a white horse on a green field, which is the recognised symbol of the rohirrim warrior.

The fourth shield belongs to Rhûlon and bears no crest, as it was a gift from Gâelren. Rhûlon is not a warrior and doesn't use a shield, but carries it in the presence of Gâelren, as a token of his respect for her offering.

At some point in the evening, Gâelren should flirt with one of the party, though not go overboard, as this is merely her way of keeping the customers happy. If a PC reacts with 'ardour', Gâelren will show signs of nervousness (which the perceptive PC may notice). Even so, she will do nothing to offend the PC- but Rhûlon might....

A player showing particular interest in what's going on around him may notice noise stirring in the News Room. This will simply be the result of one of the card players cursing another, for winning a record 100gp in a single hand of cards. Players investigating this may be invited to join the game (or warded off for disturbing it).

By this time, the card players are 'well oiled', and one of them will see Gâelren with a view to book a room. He will then be escorted to his room where he will remain, at least until the party have gone. Having lost all his money, he may be tempted to 'find some more'. He is somewhat desperate, and might seek out some funds before the party leave (searching rooms etc).

At a suitable moment, two Halflings should be brought on the scene: **Moel Gürwn** and **Jonty Grimace**, and be greeted by Guido.

Moel and Jonty have come to inform Guido of their sightings of a party of **Woses** coming out of **Fangorn Forest** about a hundred yards north of here, heading in the general direction of Stoorwich. These halflings will approach the party with the notion that the woses are out to attack their village. On hearing this news, Romili will rush outside to investigate.

Any PC outside at this point might have spotted the woses, and/or any PC with his ears open might have heard them. He/she might also acknowledge Romili's hasty retreat, in the general direction of the stables, where he might be assumed to be getting ready to flee. Anyone cautious enough to follow Romili to the stables, witness that he is presently conversing with a large crow. This bird is actually a **Crebain**, who Romili uses as his familiar. Romili is sending the bird to scout for him, keeping him informed of the Woses' progress.

Persuading the **Rohirrim** to join this expedition should not be too hard, as they like nothing better than a good hunt (Woses are one of their favourite games). The Rohirr might be somewhat concerned as to why the woses are in the area, and might assume that they are tracking orcs, thus giving the Rohan warriors an added bonus at 'the kill'. They will point this out to the party, should they elect to go along with the halflings.

Note: There will be no offer of payment unless necessary to spur the party's conscience.

Gâelren might intervene by persuading the party to help the halflings (directing her influence on the PC who is most likely to have some say in what the others might do). This is chiefly because she is fond of her bottle-boy and wishes no harm to come to his village, since they do provide her with some fine handcrafts and vegetables. She doesn't like the willful violence the Rohirrim are accustomed to, but she has accepted that it is their way of life.

Any attempt to encourage the four card players to join the party would probably be difficult, since they are quite drunk and not too eager for exercise. They will also suggest that the Rohirrim Warriors should be able to cope with a few woses. It is also probable that one (or more than one) of them would greet the opportunity to search the party's rooms while they are out adventuring.

Moments before the party are set to adventure outside, Romili will again rush outside. The party may assume he is eager to contribute his services to the annihilation of the woses. In fact, he is eager to receive news from his Crebain friend. The large bird will inform him of several **spiders** (of the large variety), in the vicinity of Stoorwich. The spiders have just exited the forest, by the bridge over the **Entwash** and are headed straight for the village. On hearing this, Romili will have a change of heart, and decide not to join the others in their quest. Nor will he advise them of the fortune that awaits them, should they continue towards the village...

The Great Outdoors

The surrounding countryside will be affected by the season and climate the GM selects. It should be taken into account, though, that being so close to the forest (a naturally formed mixed forest), there are quite a few shrubs about, and it is possible that the PCs may find a selection of herbs, etc. Whilst in pursuit, however, and taking into account the time of day, the PCs and NPCs (if any) will probably not be too concerned with plant life.

Once the party have ventured out as far as the sighting position of the Woses, a PC using his tracking skills will notice that there are no orc footprints. In fact, the only prints other than those of the woses, are of large sized bare feet (and a bit of brilliant detection might reveal that they are from hairy feet - Kudukan).

In view of this, the Rohirrim will not wish to waste their time any further. They will attack and capture the intruders, and take them hostage so that they may hold a tournament tomorrow (this gives the Woses a sporting chance of survival, and a chance to escape in the night).

The party, however, might feel that since they are out and about, they will call on Stoorwich for some herbs. This is not advised. As Guido sincerely expressed, they are likely to get their heads bitten off. If they are insistent, read the following:-

About six miles north of the Inn, the little village is under attack! Just north of the Entwash is a trail of footprints, and lots of them. *(The perceptive PC will notice these prints are about 9" across, and are from palmate feet (webbed). The prints lead directly to the village. Any player who makes a successful guess as to the type of animal that created them should receive plenty of experience points.)*

As they near **Stoorwich**, the party can just make out what made the prints; climbing over the huts of the village are **Giant Spiders**- plural! There must be at least ten of them, between 4'-8' wide. They are rushing around, with unexpected silence, enveloping the houses in the village with cob-webs. What a sight, and undisturbed by the inhabitants of this small haven...

Still, that's what they see if they stubbornly proceed on their own that evening. To be fair, the GM should try to persuade them to return to the Inn with the others and go to the village tomorrow. Who knows, they might even get back in time for the tournament at the Rohirrim's camp.

The Rohirrim, having caught their hostages, will ask **Gâelren** for her use of the stables in which to keep the Woses till the morning. She will reluctantly agree, but will be sweetened if Rhûlon asks.

Romili will ask the Rohirrim for the job of guarding the woses. This will be justified on two counts: a) they won't want their 'game' to be ruined by the escape of their captives, and b) if the woses **did** escape, they would probably take the Rohirrim's horses (or worse, kill them). Such would be certain suicide, for one of these men rides a **Mearas**, who are virtually worshipped by the Rohirrim,

though these men generally treat all their horses with the utmost respect, and care.

At this point, assuming the Party have returned to the Inn with the NPCs, and have confined their captives to the stables, they should finish off the evening with more ale and a song.

Meanwhile, Romili will watch over the prisoners in the stables until such time as he is sure people are retiring to their rooms, at which point he will himself retire, observing the prisoners from his room overlooking the Stables. Just before he retires to his room, he will move the ladder from the courtyard and position it under his window, allowing easy access to the stables. He will awaken the party should anyone be snooping around, or if the woses attempt an escape.

Stoorwich

The Hobbits (Kudduk) of this small village (# App. 50) moved here at the end of the third age, searching for a new start in life.

The village's name is somewhat of a mystery, as it more than hints that the occupants might be **Stoors**. They are in fact a group of **Fallohides**, who have only recently found their way out of the forest lands of **Rhovanion**, whilst their kin-folk moved west back in the 13th and 14th centuries of the 3rd Age. Because of this time lapse, they have still retained their original tongue '**Kuduk**', and know westron as only a secondary tongue.

Since moving here, they have only once been approached by Rohirrim, whose land they have moved onto, to which a young (and very bold) hobbit recited his history in that, *"Hobbits lived on these lands during their travels to the western lands, whilst men, Hummmphl, Rohirrim didn't move here 'til Cirion **told** them to in the 26th century (3rd age)."*

Besides this one indifference (putting the books straight), and taking into account that most hobbits don't associate with anyone but their own (no offence to the Rohirrim, who have done them no harm), it is reassuring to know there are a few 'Big People' you could count on when there are orcs or wargs about.

A few of the villagers do venture out as far as the Inn, though this started out of necessity to sell crops and baskets, etc. to the Landlady there.

Like most Fallohides, they have left the Rhovanion name **Kûd-dûkan** (hole- dweller) behind, adopting wooden dwelling houses as their new abodes (whoever said hobbits weren't trendy?). This is one of the factors that contributed to a fire nearly burning the village down, mainly because the houses are so closely knit. These houses, though of wood, are as near as they could get to their original 'holes', so far as shape is concerned. They somewhat resemble the igloo shapes they were accustomed to, but have a pentagonal shape, each family having its own house. They have also managed to stay reasonably close to the woodlands, but having found the forest somewhat too mysterious (what with **Ents** and things) for their liking, have elected to settle near the bank of the Entwash. This provides plenty of fishing (It may be their riverbank dwellings that led to the name of the village).

The Evening's Events

Having seen the party of adventurers arrive back at the Inn, and knowing them not to have gone to Stoorwich, Romili will be somewhat disturbed. He knows (thanks to his Crebain familiar) of the movements of the great spiders, and will assume that they will be on their way to the Inn after they have finished searching and offending the village.

Shortly after all are bedded down, a high pitched, shrill whistle may be heard coming from Romili's room; it is time for him to move. This may waken the sleeping adventurers, at the GM's discretion. (It is barely audible due to the pitch). He leaves his room via the ladder at the window, providing no one has returned it to its rightful place. If so, he will have to cross the hall in order to gain access to the attic via the wall panel at the end of the hall.

Once he reaches the stables, Romili will mount one of the horses in an attempt to make a speedy escape.

Moments later, a vast shadow will fill the sky. The creature that owns it is none other than a **Fell Beast** *(as in the Nazgul's mount in LOTR)*. These beasts move silently, and will go unnoticed by any onlookers unless an **Extremely Hard** -30 perception roll is made. Anyone following Romili will witness the landing of the beast, which has been attracted by the sound of Romili's whistle, and should raise the alarm. The beast will not make any direct attack; it's just curious as to what made the noise. How it responds to the next scene is for the GM to decide (treat as an NPC).

If this scene goes unnoticed, and all are asleep (which may prove difficult, should the horses or woses show alarm at the arrival of the creature), the Inn will soon be visited by a number of equally unusual critters. The great spiders which Romili had been forwarned of, have finished their investigation of the village and are heading in the direction of the Inn.

The Spiders:

These are freaks of nature in that, although to all intents and purposes they are spiders, they have huge (9") palmated feet, which leave a trail of prints which may be recognised as those of an extremely large duck. In spite of this affliction, they still move with extraordinary silence and considerable speed. The one thing that may draw attention to these spiders is the clicking noises they make whilst communicating with each other. It is reckoned that a person can hone in on this noise and actually define it as a **language**, eventually learning what they're saying. The light which emanates from their bio-luminescent eyes, does nothing to increase their chances of cloaking themselves, and once discovered, they are very easy to keep track of.

They are likely to attack in leaps and bounds, covering an approximate 15' in one movement, and are just as efficient when spinning their webs, which is the first line of attack, as it is remote and doesn't subject them to as much danger.

Though the ability to remain silent is quite within the capability of these arachnids, they don't find it too easy to find footholds when climbing, and are prone to slip on steep slopes (Inn Roofs etc.). Their vast size (4'-8') does nothing to aid their climbing skills.

If undisturbed, these creatures will completely cover the Inn with webbing, which at the rate they move should take about 1 hour. This cocoon effect was earlier employed in Stoorwich, whilst they were searching for their victim, Romili. It was only after seeing the Crebain hovering overhead, that they realised just where he was hiding - at the Inn.

NPCs at the Inn

Gâelren - Actually an Elven Mage. Daughter of **Psêudomaiar**, she was born in Northern Mirkwood, where her people (**Sindar**) found haven, after the fall of Beleriand (**Doriath**).

She met her husband **Eiron** (half-Rohhir and half-Dunadan) in Mirkwood where he had offered to aid **Thranduil's** (King of Mirkwood, once Greenwood) elves, to repel Sauron's forces that were at work against the men of Dale during the War of The Ring.

Gâelren wed Eiron, and chose to move to Rohan with her husband at the beginning of the 4th age, where she was compelled to take on a new style of life. She had also decided that she should not reveal her race to others, and that she would like to be accepted into his environment, not as a freak because of her gifts of magic, but as a Rohirrim. This has been largely successful so far, with her blond hair and blue eyes assisting her deception. Her woolen/linen attire help her to 'fit in', but she is somewhat tall for a Rohirr (5'11), and has to keep her ears covered by her long hair at all times.

She never shows displays of power (spells etc.) unless absolutely necessary. **Rhûlon** is the only person to have seen displays from her when she shot a fire bolt at a group of orcs to scare them off. She does use spells that may not be noticed, like putting people to sleep if they are threatening trouble in the Inn. On such occasions Rhûlon might laugh, but won't give her game away.

The rumour of her son being fathered by Rhûlon is untrue (what elf would do such a thing), though she does have high regard for him. Her flirting moods are merely to present herself in a more human light.

She married her husband for life, as all elves do, though it was shorter than she had anticipated. Being of Sindar blood, she is very fond of dwarves, and so spoils Romili somewhat.

Her religious beliefs are that of all Sindar and she holds the Maia, 'Goldberry' the water-spirit in high esteem.

Guido - Stoorwich's boldest of hatllings, was almost banished from their village because of a fire starting fetish, which had often set the forest afire, albeit on a small scale, and had inadvertently led to the near-total destruction of his village. He has since overcome this vice (well almost). He occasionally has visits from his close friends 'Jonty Grimace' and 'Moel Gûrwn' (who, to this day, still think of the whole incident as 'typical hobbit fortune'), and have also come to like his new name - finding it quite amusing.

The phrase, 'ain't no use a runnin', was a phrase Guido often laughs at, since only he knows where it comes from. It was all he could keep saying as he started to run away from his village, when he set fire to it - *'ain't no use a runnin, ain't no use a runnin'*. This was of course before he realised - 'water might help (and more people)', so he woke them up - at last.

He suspects there is something unusual about Gâelren, but is not too bold as to inquire. It is her presence that draws him to work at the Inn, it certainly isn't the money. Guido must be the richest of his folk, saving most of the money he 'earns'. Perhaps 'gains' would be a better word.

Psêudomaiar - A much noted mage (lvl 35), who had very little concern for politics, and was more concerned with preservation than war, thus showed no authority in the realm of Thranduil. He was fond of Eiron, and having seen him fall during the great war, held him in spirit, presenting him as normal to all but himself. It was this bond that aided Psêudomaiar's rebirth, for though in spirit kind, Eiron was still able to mate with Gâelren, the offspring of which union was Gmaêl (Psêudomaiar II). Eiron's passing away was preceded by Psêudomaiar's departure from Middle-earth, when, having given up his will to live, was unable to hold Eiron in spirit.

Gmaêl - Though the reborn Psêudomaiar, he is unaware of such. He is aware that he excels in intelligence, and thus is somewhat bold, often the envy of the regulars of the Inn, by comparison to their children. He is flawlessly fluent in three languages.

Gorin & Ramon (Gâelren's Helpers)

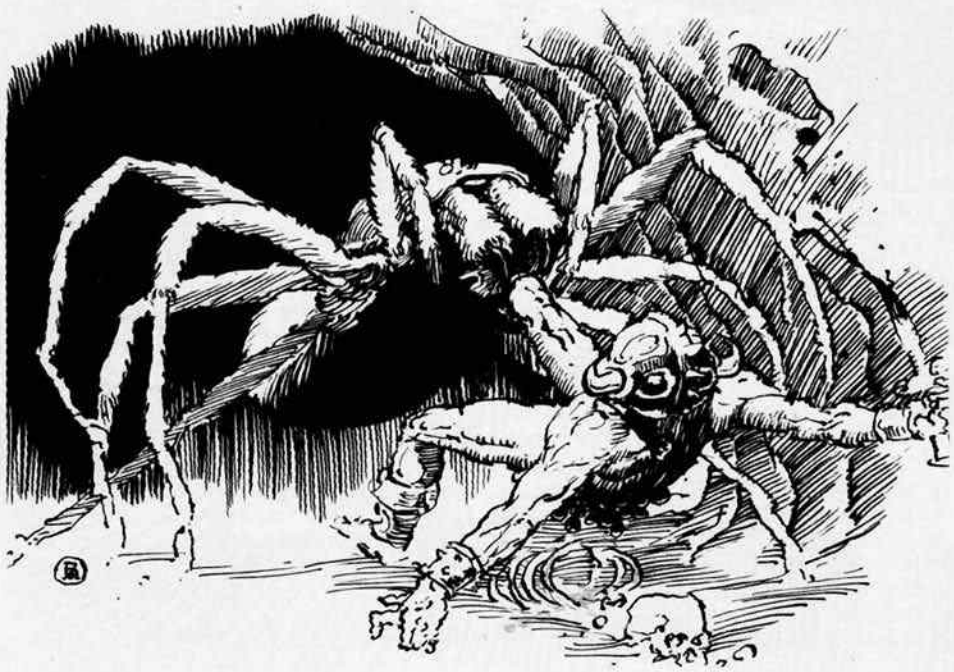
A couple of dwarves, that have been here since time immemorial. They came with the property, so to speak, having served with the previous owners for some forty five years, and the ones before another thirty years. Typical of dwarves, they are over-cautious of everyone, and keep themselves to themselves, (with the exception of Gâelren, or unless one of their own happens along), treating Romili with some disregard (this is simply because Romili gets on well with people and is far from grumpy). They have come to accept Gâelren's fondness of them, though suspect she is hiding something.

Gorin & Ramon are actually man and wife, though don't ask which is which. They are often offended by the card players who recite verse, which roughly translates **'no kids, no lead, never see two dwarves in bed'**. (lead, as in pencil). This does the trick since they were once the proud parents of triplets, (an achievement for any dwarf) until they were took by Trolls - not a pretty thought.

Rhûlon - Eiron's ex-battling buddy and Gâelren's protector, which she doesn't need but wholeheartedly appreciates, especially in times when he may intervene in situations where she might otherwise be tempted to resolve the situation herself (hence 'blowing her cover').

He is a 7th level **Animist**, who like most Rohirrim, is a noted horseman. Although he is not a warrior, he receives a +20 melee OB whilst fighting from horseback. He weilds a +10 broad sword, and a mounted lance. His shield (which he doesn't use in battle) has a 7th level 'Natures Awareness' spell in it, which allows the caster to monitor animate activity in the area. The area of effect is 300' Radius and is held for as long as the wearer concentrates. He wears leather armour, helmet, leg & arm greaves. It is this man's **Mearas** that is in the stables.

Romili - An ex-agent of **Shelob the Great**, he is actually a Half-dwarf (Umli) Bard (level



8). He is a fugitive from Cirith Ungol, after (miraculously) stealing Shelob's **"Cambeleg"** (Hand Of Might). He has since migrated west, under the guise of a travelling salesman (with occasional arm-wrestling competitions to earn a little extra), in the hope that his constant wanderings might delay Shelob in catching up with him.

Unlike most of the Umli, he is quite social in his behaviour, though stubborn when he has made his mind up. He lives in constant fear of Shelob catching up with him, though won't stop to talk to anyone about his problem, for fear of rejection. He is a bit stand-offish with Gorin & Ramon, suspecting they don't care much for him, though he greets them on his arrival, as he does everyone.

Romili is a force to be reckoned with, when armed with his +5 polearm. **Cambeleg** is a finely crafted steel gauntlet. Although he is not fully familiar with its potential, he uses it in arm-wrestling contests to great advantage. It adds +10 to all melee attacks, and in unarmoured combat +20. It should be treated as an enchanted weapon, and strikes as a mace.

Jonty & Moel - Boastful of their adventures with Guido (one to be exact), albeit aided by the Rohirrim, their imaginations tend to wander, causing people to wonder if they are making up stories. As they are generally unassuming though, the statements they make are normally justified (if they say there are woses outside, **there are woses outside!**).

Aêlrer, Ébner, & Roêmer - have been friends of Rhûlon and Eiron since childhood. They are all fine warriors, and have served their peoples on several occasions, including the rebellion against Sauron. Neither one of them have spouses, and so spend a lot of their time together, either at the Inn or hunting and fishing. Most of their catches are offered to Gâelren (not including woses), for which they are given a free meal and a couple of pints to wash it down with.

Unlike some Rohirrim, they do not stray away making temporary sites to live on. They do all their herding and farming at home (about 5 miles east of here), and rely on rumours or council summons' before they will venture away to do battle, rather than actively seeking activity.

As warriors, they know no magic, and are very wary of anyone who makes use of such. They do not associate with the card players who frequent the Inn, and are somewhat stand-offish toward strangers, unless cause is given to associate with them.

As do most Rohirrim warriors, they wear chain mail, leather arm & leg greaves and metal helmets. They normally wield any combination of; Hand-axe, Broadsword, Bola, Pole-arm or Mounted Lance (the foremost and latter being favourite). They get a +20 melee OB, whilst fighting from horseback. They each have a warhorse in the stable, and a shield which they go nowhere without.

They often show an interest in Rhûlon's shield, wondering why Gâelren presented it to him, and why he doesn't use it.

The Rohirr are not planning on staying the night.

Card School - 4 men of Dunedain blood, they are well familiar with the uses of magic - though they do not let it intefere with their card playing or other pastimes. If approached properly, they can be very friendly. They are somewhat impatient and are prone to act swiftly in resolving sticky situations.

Their arrogance will sometimes lead them, and they may easily upset people they consider inferior to themselves. It is this disposition that forced them to move away from their own kinsmen, instead relying on the shelter of the forest. They will often mock the Rohirrim reputation as warriors, knowing that most Rohirr do not behold the use of magic.

Gambling is their main vice and they will try to ensure a constant flow of money, with the attitude of "what's your's is mine", and so resort to theft.

The remaining 4 horses belong to these men.

The Woses - Though gifted beyond all doubt in the fine skills of carving and plant lore, they still find it necessary to study the workmanship and lore of elves and ents for tuition in these arts.

This particular party is a party of female animists who, in spite of the imagery they create with their painted bare bodies, were obviously not camouflaged enough, allowing the halflings to detect them.

They have just been out studying the Ents in the forest (accompanied by a couple of warriors naturally), where they were learning the arts of wood lore. They have so far been able to instill life into stone statues they make to guard their camps (pukel men), but they have not mastered this art in wood, and so study each and every move the Ents make.

It is probably the fact that these 'ugly painted' beings are feared by orcs, that led the Rohirrim to assume they were hunting orcs.

ANIMALS:

Great Spiders

These monsters, though akin to **Shelob**, are cruel mongrels of both Spider and Fell Beast. Her Ladyship Shelob seduced the said Fell Beast, offering it a seat in her kingdom, and spawned these offspring. When she discovered the lack of potential these creatures had, she had them banished (at birth), and sent forth to **Fangorn Forest**, where they should remain until such time as they might prove themselves.

These offspring aren't nearly as intelligent as Shelob's other spiderlings, as a result of which they are not gifted with the use of magic, but they do appreciate what she likes and dislikes. So, when they learnt of her desire to capture Romili, they formed a sort of posse to seek him out and take him back to their Queen and mistress.

In spite of their mis-shapen feet, they do employ the use of pincers, which are located one at either side of the fore- quarters, and are as effective as any one handed slashing weapon.

One of their main qualities is that they are venomous, and their bite can be quite fatal. The quality of their venom is equal to that of **'Slota'** (see Poisons table).

The clever PC might decide to extract this venom from the creatures, for which extra experience points would be warranted. This is of course if they have something with which to extract it and carry it in, and the expertise...

These spiders are naturally cowards, and because of this, they make snares out of their webs, covering whole buildings. This cocoon effect they employ gives them the tactical bonus that people trying to leave the buildings are likely to escape one by one, allowing the spiders to 'pick them off'. This is of course if they don't get completely caught up in the webs. If so, the spiders will take them away with them, leaving them in a cocoon, to preserve them until such time as they are hungry.

It should be noted that these spiders, due to their weak digestion system, only eat fresh food, and so will not eat dead animals. Nor will they eat anyone they have bitten, since their poison will be equally as effective on them, if digested.

Fell Beast

Due to their vast size (20'-30'), they are more than capable of supporting the weight of 1-2 men in flight. Their wingspan is equally as large as their body.

Unlike most winged predators, they don't have the aqualine beak one might expect of such huge birds. Their weaponry system is unique, in that they employ 6" fangs, which are set in a more reptilian shaped head, and 9" claws. Using their outstretched claws, they make easy prey of any target they set sights on (impaling them), whilst making a fast dive out of the skies.

Crebain

Their excellent vision allows them a +50 to perception whilst in the air.

They are akin to the corvidue (carrion), and are as swift as could be expected of a winged animal, making the ideal choice for Romili's 'familiar'.

Mearas

Rohirrim 'super horses', which are more than average in intelligence, and so prove ideal warhorses. It is unknown for anyone other than a Rohirrim to own one of these fine horses, and anyone else in possession of such a horse would arouse suspicion.

Name:	Form/Prep:	Cost:	Effect:	Difficulty (to find):
Bursthelas	stalk/brew	110gp	Repairs shattered bones and joints	Extremely Hard (-30)
Kelventari	berry/apply	19gp	Heals 1st & 2nd deg. burns, 1-10 hits resulting from heat.	Light (+10)
Arlan	leaf/apply	13sp	Heals 4-9 hits.	Easy (+20)
Rewk	nodule/brew	9sp	Heals 2-20 hits.	Light (+10)
Thurl	clove/brew	1sp	Heals 1-4 hits.	Routine (+30)
Yaran	pollen/ingest	9sp	Accute smell & taste (For 1 hour).	Easy (+20)
Slota	spider/paste	36gp	Poison (lvl 5) slow (1 day) paralysis and death.	Extremely Hard (-30)

Note: Bursthalas and Yaran found in short grass areas; Kelventari and Arlan found in tall grass areas; Rewk, Thurl and Slota found in Deciduous/Mixed Forest.

BLURT O.K. I'LL SIGN THE COVENANT.. BUT I CAN'T PAY FIVE CROWNS A WEEK
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO STEAL MORE, WON'T YOU- AND IT'S PAY! Donate, NOT FANCY A PINT? THAT ONCE BITTEN WILL STILL BE OPEN.

UPON NEARING THE INN....
THAT CERTAINLY DOES NOT BELONG IN THERE
bitten

NEARBY, ON LOCK BEND
FEY! IT'S TOO LATE TO PLAY THOR WITH MY DOOR!
THERE'S SOMETHING VERY BIG AND NASTY IN THE ONCE BITTEN!
YES, THE BARMAN
NO! THIS IS WORSE! IT HAS EATEN THE STAFF AND IS NOW ON THE ALE
I'LL MEET YOU THERE. GET WOWSER
MERCY! NOT MY STUPID BROTHER
YES, HE'S GOOD WITH BIG NASTY

LOOKS LIKE YOU'LL HAVE TO BUY ME A DRINK ELSEWHERE
JUST A MOMENT! WOULD YOU LIKE TO POSSESS A SMALL TREASURE?
THAT CREATURE IN THERE DOES NOT ORIGINATE ON THIS WORLD..
...AND THE POOR THING MUST BE RETURNED TO ITS OWN SPHERE.

YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A TREASURE??
YES! HERE SHE IS
NOW DON'T ANNOY HER OR SHE'LL SUCK YOUR CORTEX OUT THROUGH YOUR NOSE
SQUICH

THESE LITTLE CREATURES HAVE THE ABILITY TO BREATHE ANY AIR AND EXUDE OXYGEN ...WHICH YOU'RE GOING TO REQUIRE SOON.

YOU MIGHT NEED SOME ASSISTANCE WHERE YOU'RE GOING. I'LL ENLIST THOSE STALWARTS.
U-HAUL ARMOUR RENTAL
HAVE NO FEAR! YOU WILL ALL BE REWARDED FOR YOUR HELP

SHORTLY..
AB LEAST WE CAN SBEAK.
OH YEB VEBY GOOB!
I SHALL REMOVE THE CREATURES WHEN OUR TASK IS COMPLETE.
WOULD YOU BE SO GOOD AS TO TAKE THIS INSTRUMENT AND STEP THROUGH THE PORTAPORTAL
I SHALL INSTRUCT YOU VIA THE INSTRUMENT AND WE SHALL TRANSPORT THE THING FROM THE ONCE BITTEN BACK TO ITS DISTANT HOMEWORLD
SO WHAB NOW?
DIB YOU FALL FOR THAB ONE ABOUT THE TREASURE?
YEB! HE SAIB THAB THESE THINGS WILL KILL US IB WE TRY TO REBOVE THEM!

MAKE HASTE, THROUGH THE PORTAL! BEYOND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELVES.....
ON CEBIT-TEN
CEBITTEN IS WIERB
MOOB ALONG WOWSER
THIB LOOKS AB IB IT MAY BE WORTH A FEW CROWNS
RATTLE
MAYBE, IB WE SURBIBE TO SELL IB. LOOK!

AND THE BORTAL HAB GONE!

THE FLOATING THING, SOMEHOW PROPELLED BY GASEOUS OUTGOINGS, GIVES CHASE..
WITHIN THE MAW OF THE FLOATING PREDATOR, ЭЄ ЖІ ♀ MATERIALISES;
..INEVITABLY..
HELLO.. SS ARE YOU ON CEBIT TEN?.. SSS HELLO... SSS K SS I'M GOING TO SEND THE THING THROUGH! SSSSSH K PLEASE STAND CLEAR SSSS POP TRANSPORTING NOW!
OH GOB!
WELL, THERE GOES ANOTHER ROBE! THAT ONE WAB SILK-LINED TOO!
I'LL EMBLOY GOLDPOT'S REMOTE NUDGE TO DEBLECT THE REVEREND'S FALL!
FULLUBUP
HE WENT DOWN HERE ABOUTS. HE BUST BE OUT COLD!
I'LL HELP YOU PROD
PROD
PROD
WELL YOU'B BETTER FIND HIB FAST! THE BORTAL HAS REABEARD
FOUNB HIB!
COULD YOU PLEASE BE QUICK, AS IT SEEMS I AM ABOUT TO BE ARRESTED
BUMP. SCRAPE
PRESENTLY, IN THE LOCKUP...
WELL, WOWSER THROWING YOURSELF AT ME AGAIN?
I REGRET THAT YOU WERE ARRESTED AS MY ACCOMPLICES.... I MERELY EXPLAINED THE FACTS OF THE MATTER AND THEY CHARGED ME WITH ABDUCTION.....
YERK! THAT ARMOUR WAS RENTED. I'LL LOSE MY DEPOSIT!
WHEK SOUNDS LIKE A PHONY NAME TO ME
....ILLEGAL PRACTICE OF MAGIC, CREATING A THOROUGHFARE WITHOUT PLANNING PERMISSION, RELEASE OF NOXIOUS FUMES IN AN URBAN AREA, DRINKING AFTER CURFEW, AND THE BUTCHER'S GUILD TAKE A DIM VIEW OF THE UNLICENSED IMPORT AND EXPORT OF LIVESTOCK!
NEXT: COURT IN THE ACT

VOYAGES BEYOND

by Wendy Graham

Whither **Dr Who** now, I wonder, with the news that Colin Baker will not be returning as the Doctor in the next series. Whether you think that what happened over Christmas substantiates what I said in the last issue or not, I feel that events such as this indicate that **Who** is in deep trouble, and for many of its fans (including me) will never be the same again.

Perhaps the BBC's attitude to SF and SF fans was best exemplified by *Michael Grade*, when I caught him appearing live on that new talk-back show **'Open Air'**, saying that Science Fiction fans were *a very* vocal *minority of viewers*, dismissing us all by implication as sort of loud - mouthed idiots.

Bear in mind, however, when you weigh Grade's remarks that he also said that **Eastenders** is a very *moral* show, which brought a gasped 'you must be joking' comment from one of his own presenters. Anyway the great God rating does not bear him out. For as long as I could be bothered to keep the cuttings, **Star Trek** (on at a dreadful time of 6pm on BBC 2) still managed to appear every week in the channel's ratings, for its second season, in 1985. If memory serves, it even occasionally reached as high as number five. Not bad for the slot, and for a 20-year-old show which has already been seen over here a number of times.

Most Science Fiction fans are sensible enough to realise that getting decent material onto the screen costs a fortune in terms of the technical side, but surely not all Science Fiction comes into the **Star Wars** category? A superb piece of the genre with hardly a blue screen in sight was the underrated Dominick Hide story - **The Flipside of Dominick Hide** and **Another Flip for Dominick**. Quality stuff, of which I would love to see more (while I'm on the subject, has anyone else noticed how alike are actor *Peter Firth* who played Dominick and *Colin Baker*? Now there's an idea for another **Flip**. Baker playing Dominick's son... Anyone out there know the writers, Jeremy Paul and Alan Gibson?)

Finally on the subject of **Dr Who**, I hear that two Labour Euro MPs have written to BBC chief Alastair Milne pressing him to cast a woman in the title role next time around. They think a lady Time Lord would help break down the barriers for women in high tech jobs. On his cold January day, that thought hasn't half warmed me, by reducing me to near helpless laughter. Not the idea of a woman playing the part, but the idea of it making any difference to women's career choices and option!

Above: *"Doctor Who"*
Photo © Wendy Graham

STATESIDE

News from the States department:- The **new Twilight Zone** series got canned again, for the third time in a year. It is reputedly the best Science Fiction on over there at present, but I've not heard of any planned showings over here. I saw a couple of episodes, including one written by David Gerrold when he came to a Convention over here last year, and thought them excellent and very much carrying on the genre of the old series. (between the two episodes there was a piquant advert for an airline featuring *William Shatner* and *Leonard Nimoy*!)

Starman is based on the film and is 'incredibly talky and dull', even with Robert Hays in the title role, writes my informant, John Peel.

The Wizard is very variable, between fun and dreadful, but with David Rappaport as the star it's always worth seeing just for him.

John, who amongst other things compiles such items as the **Star Trek Files**, and other Files series which appear over here in specialist shops (he's done a prolific 100 in two years), also passes on the news that the **Trek TV** series is still on, planned for 1988. Opening with a two hour TV movie, 24 episodes are planned. The title is **Star Trek - The Next Generation**, set 100 years after Star Trek itself and on the *Excalibur*, but that's all the news released so far. Except, of course to wonder a) if it really will be made, and b) will we see it, and if we do, on which channel?

Turning to books now, and a general comment on publishing trends, on which I've commented also in a couple or so of this month's reviews. I've noticed recently a lack of tight editing in some of the books which have been appearing recently. What I mean is long and tedious passages where the eyes continue to read but the brain idles along with the story and which should have been deleted at birth. One gets the feeling that the author loved them. The editor should have dealt with them though and hasn't, which was a shame. What do you think?

THE GREAT DEBATE

On the debate on what is Science Fiction (and boy did I feed some tribbles there!) I checked in my Concise Oxford

Dictionary and the definition therein (which presumably is the 'official' one) is: 'Fanciful fiction dealing with space travel, life on other planets etc.' Hmmmm. That I think gets today's star non-existant prize as the worst definition so far. Best so far prize goes to Tim Ellis, who's suggestion is firmly grounded in reality.

Two letters in Adventurer #6 took me to task for comments made in my column on **Star Trek's** 20th birthday. Both correspondants seem to have missed my point that Star Trek is 20 years old and American TV 20 years ago was incredibly restricted in what could be shown. It was only under the guise of Science Fiction that they were allowed to comment. Remember the rules about no double beds, and one person having to keep their foot on the floor? And of course there was no open-mouthed kissing allowed. The struggle that the makers of **Gone with the Wind** had to keep intact the ' I don't give a damn' line is well known, and as good an example as any of the sanitising which was done by such as the NBC Broadcasting Standards Office - for some examples see **The Making of Star Trek** by Stephen E Whitfield. That same attitude meant that they couldn't have as wide a mix of races and colours as they would want if they were casting today. They had to fight hard enough to save Spock.

Even today American TV is probably much more bland than our own, but 20 years ago it was all **I Love Lucy**, and stuff like that. Books and the stage have nearly always been ahead of television and films, when it comes down to extending the boundaries.

Anyway, keep sending in your definitions, and I'll ask every Science Fiction writer I encounter for his or her definition and pass them on, as well.

Finally, I have no particular reason for including this group shot from Blakes 7, apart from the fact that I found it in my photo file and thought it might annoy the BBC!

REVIEWS

The Continent of Lies.
by James Morrow.
Published by Arrow.
£2.50 Paperback.

A cephapple is a dreambean, a sort of vegetable, a pre-programmed dose of LSD. Each cephapple, when eaten, delivers to the eater a cross between a really believable dream and a good movie.

Since the dreamer lives in the dream, it follows that much care must be taken in the choosing of those who create the dreams. James Morrow's book deals with what happens when a nutcase manages to create the ultimate horror dream and then finds someone to grow it for him.

The cephapple tree must be traced and destroyed and the job lands with ace and jaded (ahem) reviewer **Quininn.**

Nice story, a Science Fiction whodunnit really, and well paced, apart from the bits where the good guys are travelling through the tree, which I found a real yawn.

▲

The War for Eternity.
by Christopher Rowley.
Published by Arrow
£2.95 Paperback.

Save your money, so far as I'm concerned. If this is eternity then it's not worth fighting for.

I suppose that as a reviewer I should read everything that comes, on your behalf, but sometimes, dear reader, I can't be so noble. I couldn't get further than the first few pages of what the blurb calls **'A brilliant epic of interstellar war'.** If I'm missing something wonderful perhaps someone would be kind enough to tell me, but, until then, no thanks.

▲

Golgotha Falls.
by Frank DeFelitta.
Published by NEL
£2.95 Paperback.

One thing which seems common among Science Fiction authors is their mistrust of many organised religions, so this book, which I think must be classed as fantasy, and by the author of **For Love of Audrey Rose**, isn't really, strictly in the Science Fiction or Fantasy categories. For it is more of a pro-religious account of a confrontation between good and evil, Roman Catholic Church and the Devil.

Not being much of a one for supernatural or horror books, which some publishers lump in with Science Fiction and Fantasy and send to me and which are beyond my interest and brief, I generally dodge them (I need a good night's sleep...!) but I did read this one, and must report that it is one of those rare books which makes the eyes go wide and the mouth say wow as you reach the last page.

Sure it is a bit tedious at times, but generally it is a powerful tale, whether you believe in the Prince of Darkness or not.

▲

The Wizards and the Warriors. Chronicles of the Darkness (Volume 1)
by Hugh Cook.
Published by Corgi
£2.95 Paperback.

That volume 1 stuff in small print on the corner should warn you, though there's nothing inside which gives the game away, but I happen to know thanks to a friendly warning from a publisher's PR that this is the first in a series of 20, yes, Twenty books.

This is a standard Wizards sort of book. Nothing really special about it. Could use hard editing at time and expanding at others, as people you thought had been

Above: *"Blakes Seven"*
Photo © Wendy Graham

killed suddenly re-appear with the barest of explanations, if any.

Personally I'm getting rather bored with wizards.

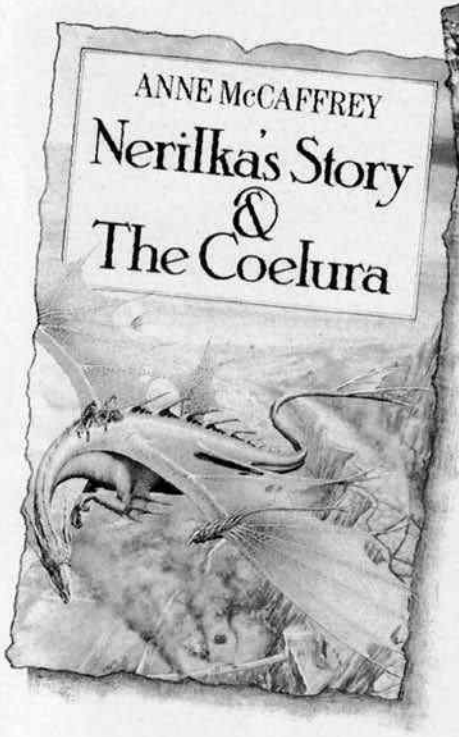
▲

Nerilka's Story and The Coelura.
by Anne McCaffrey.
Published by Bantam.
£8.95 Hardback.

Two Novellas in one volume. **Nerilka's Story** runs parrallel to the events of **Moreta, Dragonlady of Pern**, and tells the story of the pandemic which ravaged the planet from the viewpoint of a Lady firstly of Fort Hold and then of Ruatha.

Ms McCaffrey once told me that sometimes she doesn't know why certain things happen in her Pern books until later when she finds it all fits in - Firelizards are a good example, and cross checking this book against Moreta she did it again. Nerilka's story was right in there, waiting to pop up, just as Jaxom's did after a passing mention of the hatching of the white dragon.

It is par for the course for me that I loved Nerilka, but I confess I wasn't that taken with **The Coelura,** the second story, which is set in a new part of Anne's other universe, that of the FSP. It is one of those stories which will add weight to those who call her the Barbara Cartland of Science Fiction.



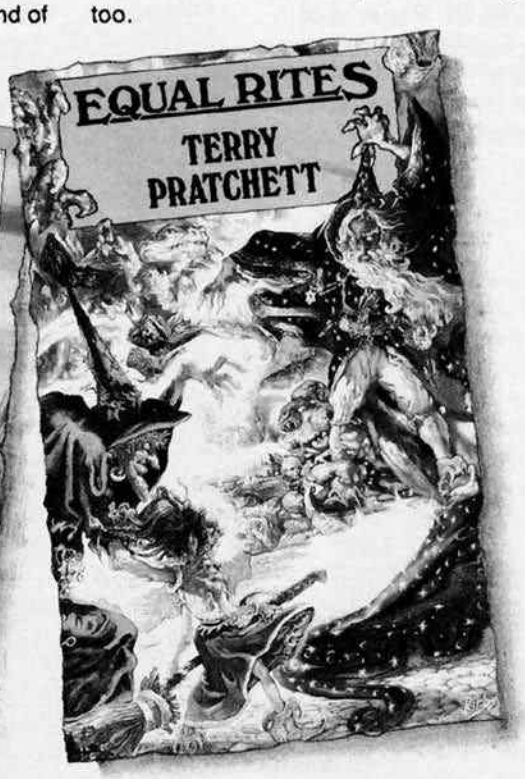
The Peace Machine.
by Bob Shaw.
Published by Grafton
(under the Panther SF imprint.)
£2.50 Paperback.

This Bob Shaw tale has been around for some time and made many appearances in print before. It is first copyrighted a 1971 and it was first published in Great Britain as **Ground Zero Man** in 1976. It is very much a comtemporary story. A brilliant but unassuming and unfamed mathematician has an attack of the eurekas! And comes up with the theorum which will enable him to build a device which will spread like a molecular Aids through the nuclear weapons world, causing them all to detonate after he presses the button.

Therefore everyone must disarm, and quickly. Naturally they don't want to, so much of the book is concerned with them seeking hero Lucas Hutchman for something a little more vigorous than a cosy chat;...

I like the idea, but found it difficult to accept in places that the hero was quite so brilliant - not in the flash which gave him the theory, for such things certainly do happen, the original eureka situation being the best known example, but when Hutchman then went out and sort of Knocked together the device virtually his bathroom I began to wonder. And I got sick and tired of his silly relationship with his neurotic wife.

Maybe Shaw could go back and look again at the idea, get rid of the wife and give Hutchman an engineer friend. For once I think that the story could be longer too.



Equal Rites.
by Terry Pratchett.
Published by Victor Gollancz.
£9.95 Hardback

Great, another discworld story, to follow on from the delicious 'Colour of Magic' and 'Light Fantastic'. It always surprises me that someone who is a PR for the CEGB could ever write such funny stuff - as someone who had to wade through the stodge of nationalised industry's PR's idea of good press release for it seems like many years. How on earth does Mr. P do it?

This time the latest in the Discworld's 'n-ology' deals and debunks one of the classic cliches - why are witches women, warlock and wizards men? Why can't a woman be a Wizard? Why shouldn't Eskarina be admitted to the Unseen University? You can tell, by the way, that this book follows on from the other two, since the Librarian at the University likes bananas, though he and death (still as phlegmatic as ever), are the only continuing characters. And if you don't know what I'm talking about, shame on you for you should most certainly have read the other two books, and you should read this one.

▲

Free Live Free.
by Gene Wolfe.
Published by Arrow
£2.95 Paperback.

Starts well this book, but by the time the finale approached I was still reading it pretty much for the sake of finally finishing it - you know the **Mastermind Syndrome**, "I've started so I'll finish". A nice idea which got buried under a blanket of over-convolution.

▲

The Postman.
by David Brin.
Published by Bantam.
Paperback.

After reading one of David Brin's earlier books **The Practice Effect,** I found I didn't mind doing the housework so much - after all. I was practicing the vacuum cleaner to a state where I only had to look at it and the house would immediately become immaculate.

This time I've been eyeing my postman with a new respect. Now admittedly the Postman of the title isn't a GPO bod, but an ordinary holocaust survivor in the US of A, who finds that taking on the mantle of a descendant of the pony Express turns into a unifying factor for, within the scope of the novel, the remnants of the States.

It is a tale which sets one thinking - who **would** be the leaders after the bomb drops or whatever? Would it be the beurocrats and the military as they themselves think, or would it be someone as... ordinary...as a postman, simply because a postman can bring people into contact once again, and gains a certain respect from his job?

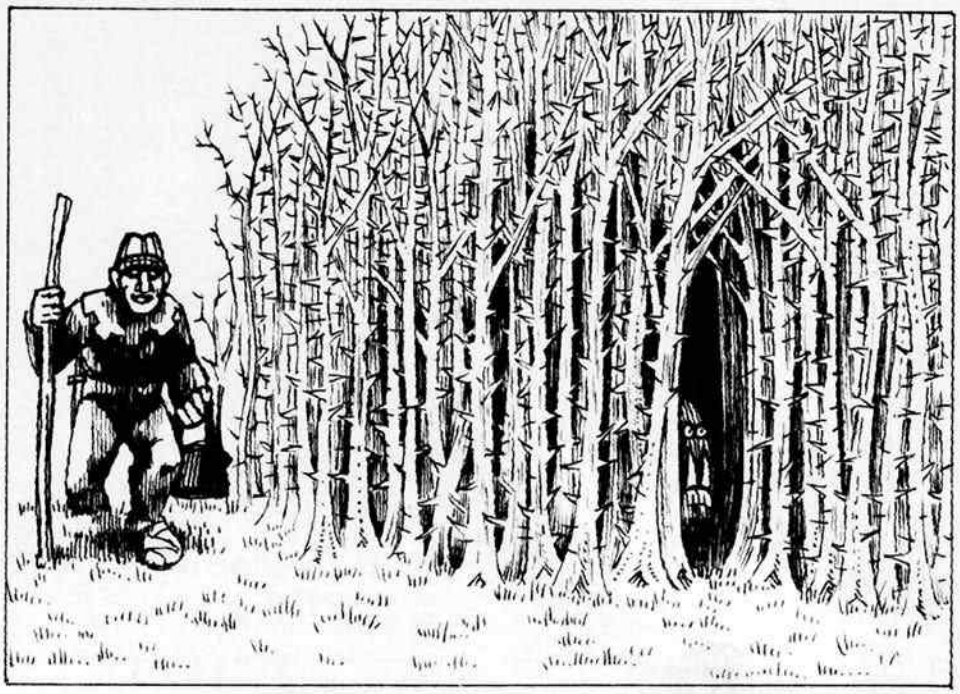
Wendy

Scatophagium Campaign

BY ROBIN PARRY & STE DILLON

INTRODUCTION:

The following article is brought to you from the notes of **Incantor Whek,** which first became available to **Adventurer** readers in issue #5. Whilst not necessary to possess back issues of Adventurer, the **Scatophagium** scenarios are designed to be more enjoyable when played as part of the campaign. For those already enjoying the benefits of this detailed land, we take up our magnifying glass this issue to investigate the flora and fauna of the surrounding countryside.



THE FRONTIER MOVES SOUTHWARD:

Scatophagium has traditionally been seen as the Southern outpost of civilization, but has now been recognised as an established town, surrounded by cleared and cultivated land. The pioneering spirit (amongst humankind) has moved south to new territories, and is now embodied in **Equilatir**, a small, newly established area which neighbours Escatir. The town is overseen by priests of **Imeprath**, who are involved in the construction of an abbey/agricultural college, and are establishing their vineyards.

FLORA:

The most common plants growing generally in the Scat. area are **nettles, brambles, wild rose,** etc. (Helping to form the impression of a Thorny, harsh, bitter landscape). More localised plants include **Nobnut** (a spikey, gorse-like shrub which grows up to 8' high), **Greater Black Wormwood** (efficacious herb used extensively in healing), **Pussthorn** (dense growths of upright, straight stalks bearing long thorns- similar to Blackthorn, except a scratch from this will become inflamed and secrete festering puss!). An antidote sometimes grows nearby, but this is rare, and needs a well-trained eye to find.

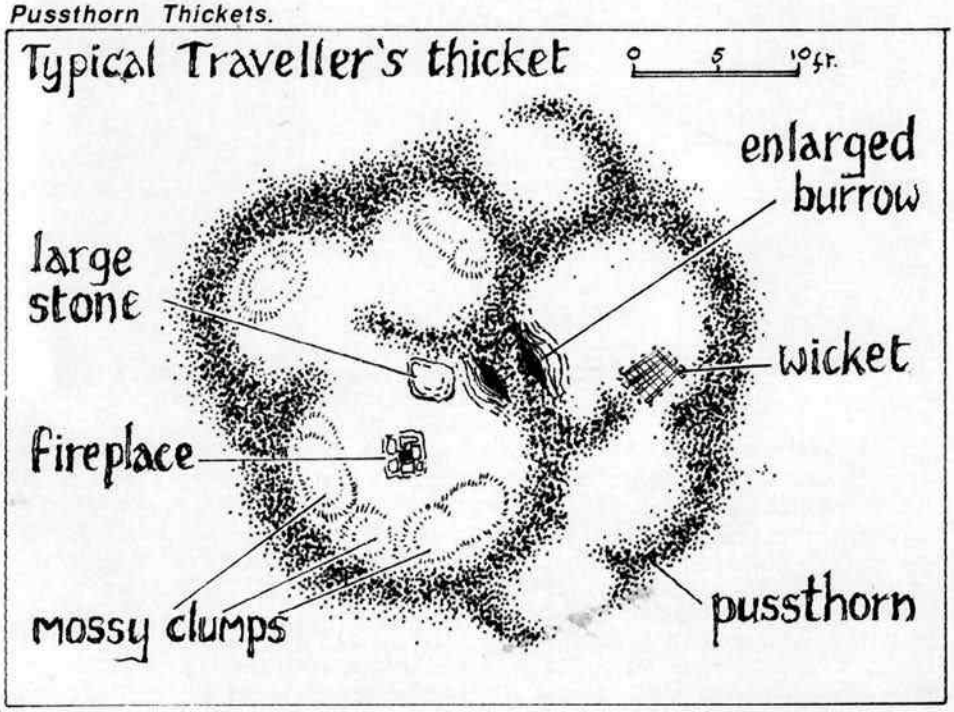
Pussthorn thickets are a fairly common feature of Scatophagian countryside, appearing as dense areas of dark, upright stems which grow closely together, to a height of about 12'. These can cover areas up to 100' in diameter, in suitable conditions, but are usually restricted to 30' to 60'. The slender thorny trunks form an all but impenetrable barrier. There are open areas within these thickets, caused by the annual death of old thickets, and so can provide secure, barricaded dwellings for the occasional creature, who can burrow their way in from underneath.

Travelling adventurers have followed this example set by nature, and can sometimes be found sheltering within the thorny walls. Access is gained by enlarging the burrows of previous residents and building a door of some kind. Occasionally, the open areas within the thicket may interconnect to form a series of "rooms", often with an opening in the walls, forming an archlike doorway.

Thickets within thickets have been found, where as the old growth spreads out over a wide area, open spaces are left within the thicket, where fresh new growth often springs up, usually at the centre of the 'forest'.

Some thickets that are adjacent to well-travelled routes will be found to contain the evidence of a previous occupation; some may still be occupied! Many of these temporary shelters are quite well set up, with moss beds arranged in sheltered nooks, with woven thickets to secure entrances, and skin awnings arranged to provide shelter. Small hearths built of stone have to be carefully controlled in this woody environment, to prevent possible thorn-fires.

Pussthorn Thickets.



TREES:

There are few areas of woodland of any great size in the vicinity; these have been mainly denuded as a source of building timber, fire wood, ship bodys, etc. Also, these have been cleared as a matter of policy, for the fewer forests around, the fewer the opportunity for 'nasties' to lurk.

Local trees commonly encountered include **maple** (sugar maple- used for spears, the sap for syrup [1-4% sucrose], Red Maple and Sycamore maple), **Rowan, Ash, Lime, Oak, Birch, Elder** (used for wine), **Cork** (used for furniture, rafts, etc.). These are all deciduous, so their bloom depends on the season, which should be borne in mind for any ongoing campaign.

Some Coniferous trees include **Larch** and **Fulthess pine** (a bit like Scots pine, but known as the "Boo Tree" as it usually resembles the silhouette of someone shouting "BOO!", with their hands up:-)

This can cause a nasty fright to an unsuspecting traveller, particularly at night-time, when the tree can almost seem to move...

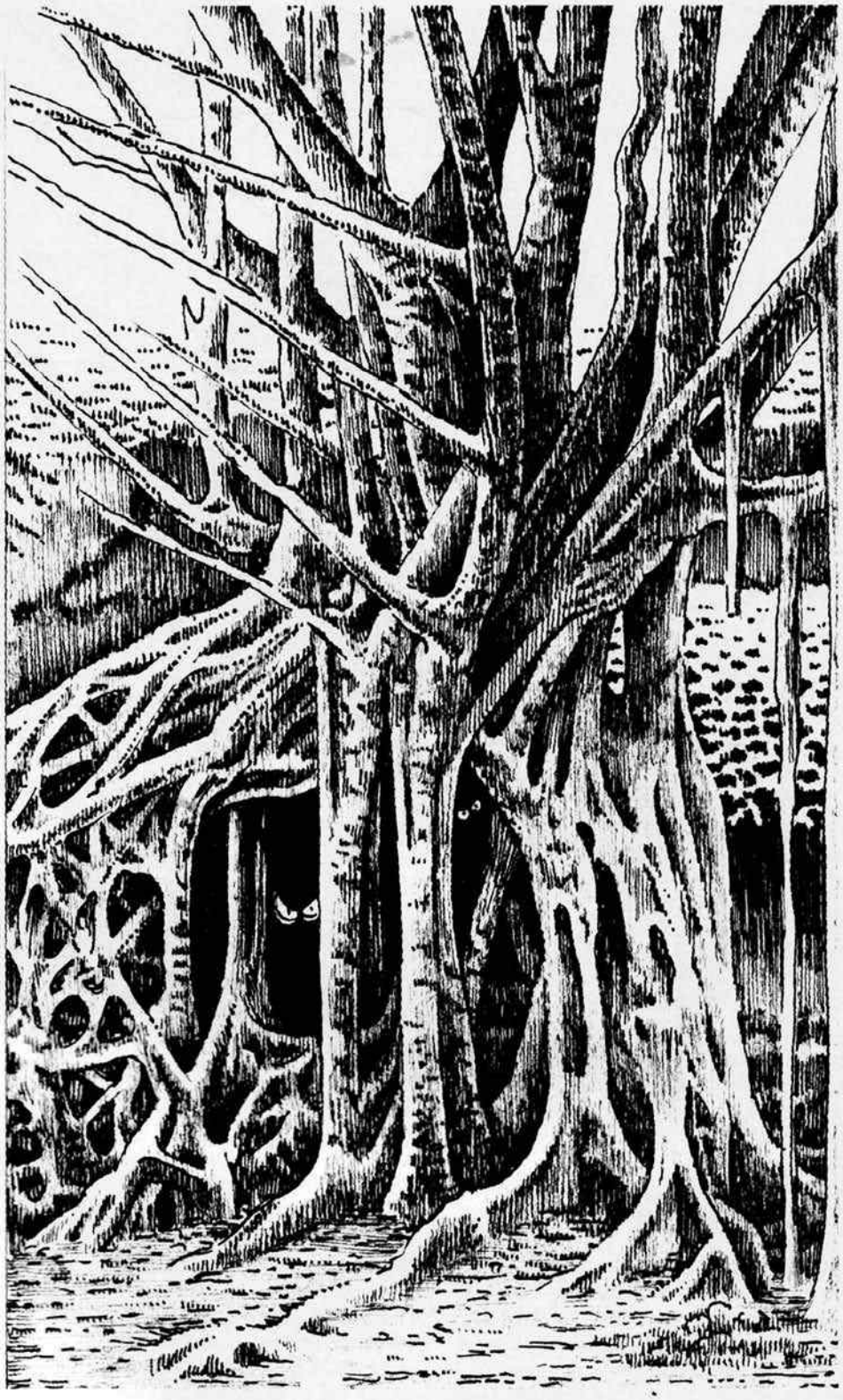
Some timber is exported , but only rare and valuable woods are profitably shipped out. However, timber products are a different matter, eg. "**Ardourbark**" is an aphrodisiac oil which crystallizes under the bark of "**Cupola**" trees (a relative of Camphor and Cinnamon trees), which are now found only east of Scat, where the lumber industry still flourishes. The workers are supposed to declare all ardourbark they find, to the Scat-based company, but there is a thriving black market, usually controlled by the timber village overseers. Parties of impoverished adventurers have been known to accept employment by rich timber merchants in order to infiltrate these lumber encampments. Their aim is to find out just who is selling how much of this very valuable substance, and to whom.

The work in these lumberjack type places, found about 30 miles east of Scat., is hard and poorly paid. The wood is lashed into rafts and floated down the Scat. river. The workers are periodically harrassed by brigands and the like (both human and non-human), as well as by wild creatures. Amongst the latter enemies of the workers is the **Boring Beetle**, which will attack a man and gore swiftly into him if their trees are molested.

One notable, if uncommon tree is the **Enruikan Morace**, or **Beggar's Fig**, which is similar to the **Banyan Tree**. This variety will tolerate a cooler climate, although Escatir is as far north as it will grow. Reaching heights of up to 100', the aerial roots grow down from its spreading branches to penetrate the ground, becoming a stilt-like stem which produces its own roots to enhance growth. These form small thickets of densely packed stems and roots, usually with spaces in between this mesh of growth, wherein numerous creatures have been known to take up residence. Not least of these are paupers and pilgrims, although some rather more predatory types may be encountered, such as snakes and bears.

Certain creatures with the ability to blend in with the natural background would be difficult to detect within the confines of the morace, and could well be lurking unbeknownst to any adventurer seeking shelter...

The entrances to underground lairs are occasionally located within the thickets created by this tree. The Morace provides a reasonably secure shelter for the beleagured traveller, and can contain the possessions of a previous visitor, or even the visitor himself (dead or alive...)



FAUNA:

The predominant creatures in the Scat. area (apart from humans), are **rodents** (rats, rabbits and badgers), **canines** (wolves and foxes), some **wild herd** animals (deer, goats, and some wild sheep), **birds** (hawks, owls, sparrows, tits, etc.). There are a small number of **wild horses** occasionally found in the hills to the south, though these are rare. Reptiles such as **snakes** and **lizards** are also fairly common.

More exotic inhabitants of the area in general include Wild **Boar,** black and brown **Bears, Giant Eagles,** Giant **Owls,** Giant **Toads, Antelope,** wild **Cattle,** Large **Lizards** and the **odd Lynx,** all of which have provided countless hours of enjoyment to the visiting adventurer.

INSECTOIDS/ARTHROPODS:

Most common insects exist in Scat. including ants, beetles, dragonfly, wasps, etc. There is also a good selection of Giant forms, usually tied to a specific location, though these may be encountered at random, usually seeking prey... The most notable of these giant insects include **Dragonflies** and **Stag-beetles**, and can be rather nasty!

The Singing Beetle: This creature is worthy of note because of its peculiar talent of emitting an ululating call, which sounds much like a human song or wail, without words. A huge insect with extremely hard exo-skeleton, this creature will sometimes inhabit **puss-thorn** thickets or **Morace** trees, luring prey towards it with its strange call. It is (naturally) carniverous, and will emit a final blast of sound when its prey is within about 10' (or when it is hit). This blast of sound rapidly ascends into the ultrasonic range, temporarily stunning all who hear it, within a 10 yard range.

The Singing Beetle is about 4' high and a yard broad, with powerful mandibles that can dismember even an armoured

The Singing Beetle.

character swiftly. This all depends, of course, on whether it can get to its prey, as it is a very slow-moving critter, and very much out of depth when not lurking in its hidey-hole. It has wings but does not fly, except to locate a lair, or if necessary to escape death. Even then, its flight is cumbersome and slow.

The pregnant female of the species will lay her eggs in secluded spots, which hatch out to produce large grubs up to 2' in length. These in turn pupate into nymphs of about 5' or 6'. It is in this guise that the creature is most deadly; voracious and rapid, they devour all the meaty dishes they can find before metamorphosis into the final form of the Beetle.

OUT AND ABOUT IN SCATOPHAGIUM:

The party have, for whatever reason the GM's campaign decides, elected to enrol on one of Scatophagium's most famous tourist attractions, the guided tour of the countryside. More of an expedition than an excursion, this trip usually lasts for about three weeks, and many of Scat's wealthy and studious personalities have ventured at least once, if only for the esteem and the great insight to the area that this commands. The guide, none other than **Incantor Whek** himself, is a veteran at this; he takes two trips a year, in the spring and autumn, when there is more chance of survival.

The following is given as a preamble to the adventure, but with a little modification by the GM, the facts may be given to the players while they are actually on the adventure (assuming, of course, they decide to go along with it...)

"The excursion you are about to embark on is an exciting journey, if somewhat plagued with minor difficulties. Most people find this an exhilirating and memorable trip, and the fatality rate is kept down to about 25 %, so you stand a very good chance of survival!

"We will, of course, be visiting the great outdoors around the town of Scatophagium. If you refer to the map in your guide books, you will note that the countryside consists generally of scrubby grassland, interspersed with copses of young trees, solitary oaks, rocky outcrops and grassy Knolls. Small woods of Ash and Birch provide homes for birds and animals.

"The higher ground contains Ling and Heather, moorland and heath, with isolated Rowan trees and the odd Fulthess Pine. The rock formations consist of weathered crags, Monadnocks (isolated hills or rock masses) and buttes, which rise majestically as enourmous flat-topped hills.

*"The **Coastal areas** around Scat. tend to have shingle beaches, in which we must be careful to avoid the deadly pincers of the burrowing shing-mites. For this reason, adequate footwear must be worn at all times!*

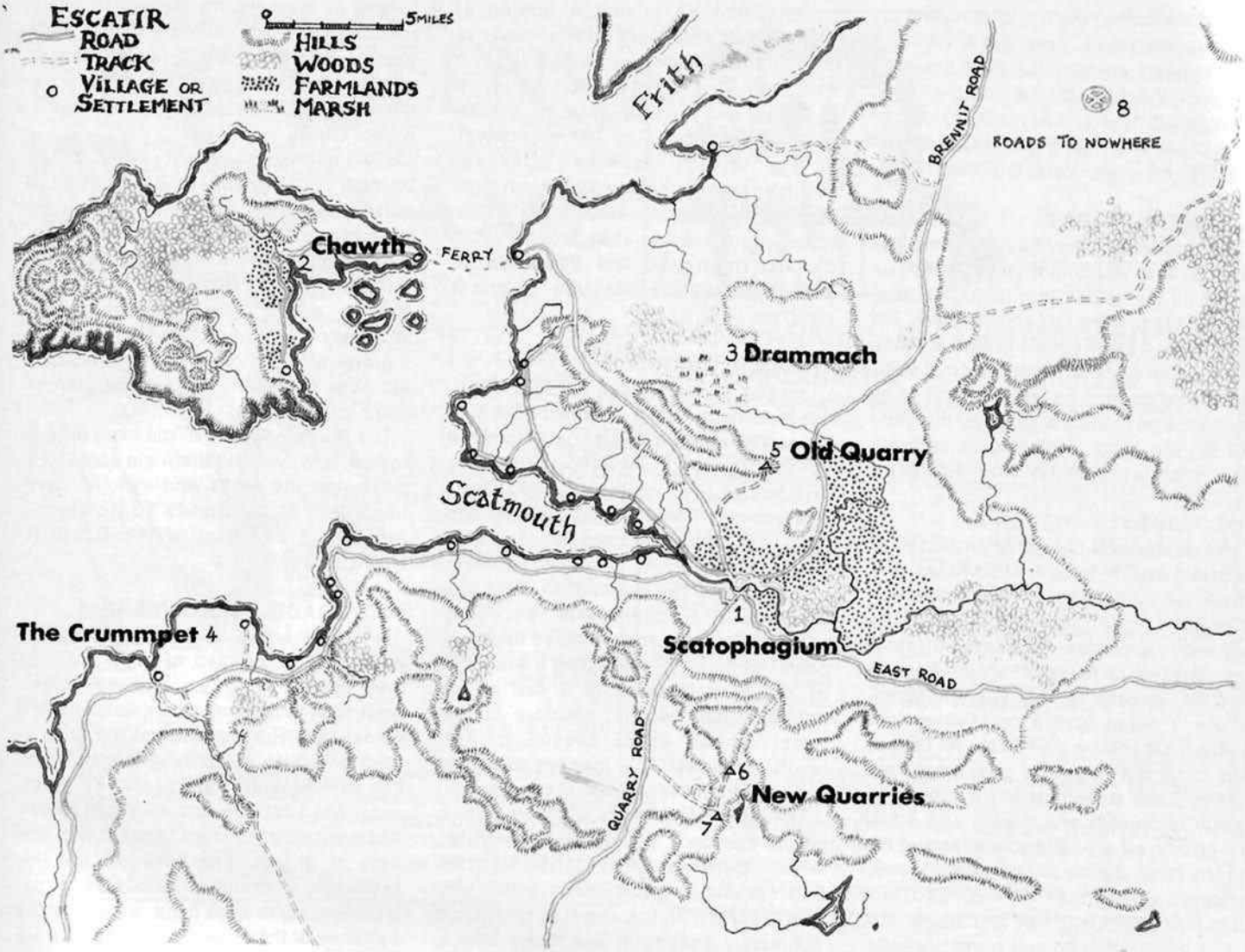
*"Near the estuary of the River Scat. are found shiny black **mud-flats**, often treacherous to adventurers who presume it to offer a solid grounding.*

*"To the west of Scat., at the **Crumpet**, and North, on the **Frith**, are steep cliff faces which project out into the Sea. We will also be visiting some of the Sea Caves in the area, many of which are found in these cliff faces.*

*"Also on our travels, I will point out to you some of the larger woods and forests, which consist of Oak, Birch, Maple Ash and some Conifers. You will notice that within these larger woods and some smaller forests will be areas of Old Woodland where huge trees stand amongst the decaying debris of their fellows. These are generally quiet and eerie places, favoured by creatures of dark disposition, so I would advise caution if you should wander too closely to their perimeters. And I must insist when we get there that we all **STICK TOGETHER.***

"We will also come across good examples of marsh land which is scattered about, and the odd bog or swamp, which are normally found bordering streams or pools.

*"A large swamp known as **Drammach** lies about 8 miles north of Scat. This is bordered on the SW by steep hills which we shall have to trek, using the **Chawth Ferry Road.** You will see this marked on your guide map. These hills are bleak and unfriendly, and I must warn you that many a late traveller using this road has reported weird sightings out across the dismal swamp. Now, many of you might*



feel that these rumours are just as a tourist attraction, but nevertheless, this is one more place where we must ***Stick Together,*** *especially if our course takes us there after dusk, which by* ***Manud*** *I hope it* ***does not!***

"It is in this area that many good wagons have been known to run off the road amid the frequent fog occurences near the swamp. These have a tendency to career downhill, into the swamp itself, a fate which would leave the boldest paladin looking for his brown trousers!

*"****Drammach*** *is only negotiable by foot if the traveller knows the correct and convoluted way through; fortunately for this party, I do. Passing from one dryish section to another, we will hopefully avoid the pools where water snakes and aquatic trolls lurk, submerged from sight, waiting to catch you unexpected. It is mainly for this reason that we bring* ***Bolfug*** *along on these excursions. It is his job to loiter at the back of the party, ready to fend off any surprise lunges from behind. Bolfug, of course, is gifted with the blessing that he is never surprised. Unfortunately, this does tend to quell his sense of humnour somewhat. Nonetheless, a good deal of aquatic troll deaths are thanks to him.*

"Over the wetter areas of the swamp, we will see strange lights glowing; these are harmless, but can be deadly if you know what I mean. These are mainly seen at the centre of the swamp, where we will ***not*** *be going; our course merely skirts around the edge. Those foolish enough to attempt to traverse across the swamp seldom live to tell of it; those who have speak of animate vegetation and the marrow-gnawing sounds of some howling ghoul or wight.*

"Now for a little history about the place; Drammach was the site of a massacre of a dark, demi-human people in the early days of Scatophagian settlement. There is a small chance that you may have heard of this fabled episode of the history of Scat.'s pioneering forefathers..."

(**GM**: there is more chance that the PCs have heard of the **Adamantine** weapons discovered in the swamp. These weapons are, for the most part, dark grey-blue swords of an unaturally hard, stonelike mineral. They are about four feet long, which gently taper to a square point. They are perpetually sharp, but require periodic abrasive honing using diamond dust. This will help it achieve its miraculous cutting powers. Daggers, shields and other artefacts such as pieces of armour or jewellery have also been found, but such finds as these are extremely rare.)

"After our little trip to The Swamp, we will find an easier route back to Scat., where our trip will be rounded off with song and epic poetry. Here you will be able to buy small momentos of your excursion, copies of my books on Scat. history and folklore and the like. Now, is there any one who has had a change of heart and does not want to journey with us?"

The players may, at this point, decide that they know enough of Scat. to want to 'pull out' of this seemingly dangerous adventure. Of course, if they do, there can be no refund; they have effectively paid (highly) for the lecture. Of course, there is nothing wrong with 'pulling out' officially, and attempting to follow from a 'safe' distance, though Bolfug may have to deal with anyone who gets **too** close.

The following extract will be quoted by Incantor Whek as the party approach the swamp. It should not be divulged to players not engaged on the journey:-

"The last remnant of the dark folk were herded into the swamp, ***Drammach****, by superior force and then systematically destroyed by archers on the banks. Those that escaped the arrows and penetrated deeper into the marsh no*

doubt fell victim to the horrid denizens of those murky pools. Lord ***Sine Vertex,*** *commanding a large force of cavalry, patrolled the hills to the south of the swamp, cutting down any survivors that tried to escape that way"* ***17,458, the History of the Vertex Dynasty.***

SCENARIO HOOKS:

These scenarios may be used whilst the players are accompanying **Incantor Whek** on his guided tour, though if they are, we suggest the GM should 'divert' the party away from the main group, an easy task in the wilds of Scat! Alternatively, the scenarios may be used as part of an adventure on their own, or when the party are 'on the road', travelling to the next town, escorting a wagon, etc. Feel free!

THE ROADS:

The Scat. roads consist of packed earth and rocks with frequent pot-holes and obstacles such as fallen rocks and trees, sometimes deliberately placed by brigands to waylay travellers. Streams are crossed at fords or crude wooden bridges, except at the Brennit Road, where a stone bridge crosses a river tributary six miles out of Scat. All bridges and fords put travellers at a great risk, leaving them vulnerable to the numerous bands of bandits and rogues who infest the countryside. All the roads (except the quarry and South Coast roads) pass among agricultural lands, and are bordered by fields of hay and silage, root crops (usually turnip) and some brasicas.

DRAMMACH:

The Swamp is reputed to be haunted, treacherous, and infested with huge **centipedes**. It presents a dour picture, with brown tussocky growth protruding from the brackish water. Isolated trees, mostly dead, stand at odd angles here and there, supporting the occasional buzzard. At the NW extremity of the marsh stands a malevolent **Old Willow**.

Several years ago, a merchant's wagon, pursued by brigands, was pulled by frightened horses into one of the pools near the center. Surprisingly, the horses managed to remain on firm ground for over half a mile before plunging into an exceptionally deep pool. The horses were quickly disposed of by the Drammach residents, but the wagon remains submerged, partially preserved by the alkaline waters. It contains the merchant's possessions, including a strongbox and a variety of ceramic and glass bottles+ vials, containing the oils, unguents and tonics that were the merchant's trade. An aquatic troll and his mate have found the sludgy area beneath the wagon a desirable residence.

Searching and excavation for the relics of the dark folk/massacre victims is a slow and dangerous job. A small chance exists of finding a piece of armour, probably still containing a portion of skeleton, to which will adhere clods of partially preserved wrinkled pale flesh. A smaller chance exists of finding a sword or shield, and possibly even an artefact such as a talisman or valuable jewel, though this is extremely unlikely, requiring many hours of patient and organised excavation. Such investigation would require diving skills, or the aid of divining or prayer, and **Drammach**, deadly during the daylight, becomes much worse of a night.

THE OLD QUARRY:

Located about 5 miles north of Scat., this disused quarry is now half-filled with water. The quarry sides go down to about 40' into the water, and the edges are treacherous to those standing too close. The quarry is about 170' in diameter and nearly 100' deep in places (half of which is below water).

The quarry is disused due to the presence of **Rockweevils**, peculiarly adapted beetles that have bored their way deep into the stone, rendering it worthless as masonry. A block of it can easily crumble under weight, because of the honeycombed effect caused by the beetle's activities. This may not be readily apparent from the outside, of course.

The **Rock Weevil** is plagued with a parasite known as the **Blotch Mite**, which burrows under the weevil's exo-skeleton and lives within it, eventually driving the weevil to erratic and aggressive behaviour. The Blotch Mite is so named because it can infest humans coming into contact with an affected Beetle, and forms colonies under the skin, which appear as purple blotches. The mites secrete a substance into the victim's bloodstream. This secretion causes complacency towards the blotches and irritations at first, but the irritation swiftly becomes a distraction so great that the victim will exhibit sudden outbursts of violence and self-destructive behaviour. The victim's mind is dulled by the mite's secretions, and tormented physically to an unbearable degree. A character coming into contact with an infested person stands a chance of becoming infested also.

The infestation takes a week or so to set in. The blotches gradually appear over this period, with outbursts becoming more frequent as time goes by. The victim's complacency (caused by the mite's secretion), and outbursts of violence and aggression, make him an unsuitable subject for healing spells.

An unlucky bandit who chose the wrong victim has had the tables turned on him, and has been paid for his troubles with an outbreak of purple blotches! Of course, he doesn't know that his malady is anything more than a skin rash.

If the party encounter the bandit, and do not kill him outright, he will offer to ransom himself by revealing the fact that he has a reasonable stash hidden in the Old Quarry. Besides the unforeseen danger of the mites,the quarry banks are crumbling and threatening a fall into the waters below.

If someone is unlucky enough to become contaminated by Blotch Mites, a cure is available, and it might even be possible to find out about it. The treatment involves a poultice of **Greater Black Wormwood**, and **Singing Beetle eggs**. The Greater Black Wormwood isn't too difficult to locate, as it grows wild , if not commonly, favouring old sites of habitation (perhaps planted there for its healing properties).

The Beetle eggs are a little more difficult to find, however, but there are some who claim that the grubs and nymphs have been seen at the **Roads To Nowhere**, an ancient site east of the **Brennit Road**.

THE ROADS TO NOWHERE:

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Amongst these ruins are to be found the eggs, grubs and nymphs of the Singing Beetle, in enormous numbers, and perhaps a full-grown Beetle or two.

Environment of Scat.

Climate: temperate.
Rainfall: moderate (625-750 mm. annually)
Prevailing winds: North Westerly, from the *Ladrone Sea*.
Sea Currents: the Ladrone tide flows from West to East between the island of CHAWTH, and SCATMOUTH
Temperature: Varies (-5°C to 18°C).
Morphology/Landscape: Generally Plains and Ancient Fold mountains. (More details on the map provided with issue #5 of Adventurer.)
Common Minerals: Iron and copper, with some sulphur.
Land Cover: Barren heath and peat bogs as well as some agricultural land in the lowlands. The upland, or hilly regions, consist of grass moorland/ sub-alpine vegetation.
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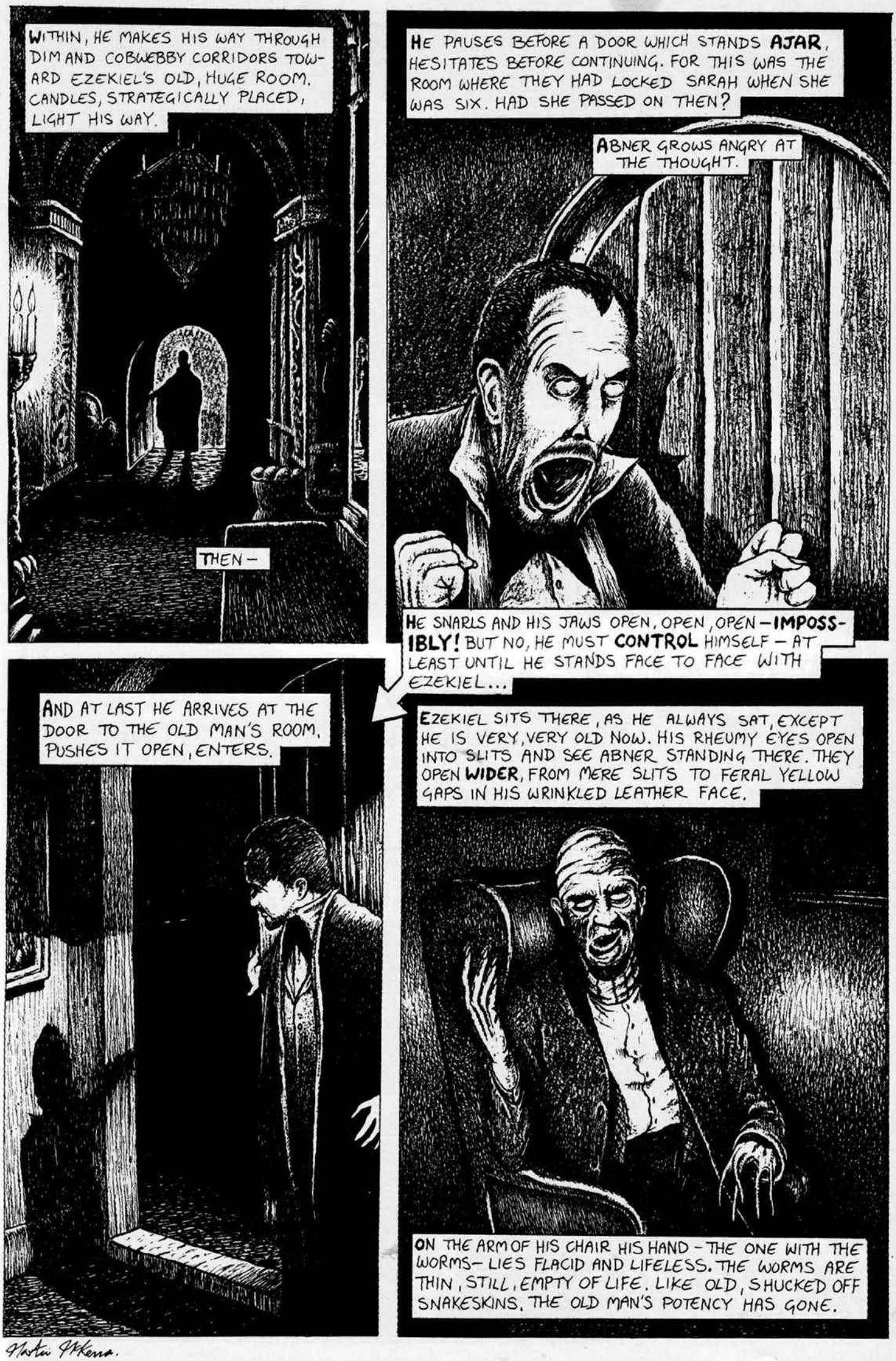
VISA

RETURN TO ARKHAM:
Concluding from last issue, **Abner Whitlock** returns to **Arkham** to the Old Mansion that was his home. His return brings back memories of a disturbed childhood, memories of his mysterious cousin **Sarah**, and of hard, old Uncle **Ezekiel**, with his terrifyingly deformed **worm-ended** fingers!!

AND YET, INSTEAD OF SHUDDERING AND SCREAMING AS HE HAD SHUDDERED AND SCREAMED THEN, NOW HE ONLY SMILES HIS MIRTHLESS SMILE.
AND YET AGAIN OLD EZEKIEL HAD BEEN RIGHT, FOR DESPITE HIS HIDEOUS FINGERS HE **WAS** LEAST DIFFERENT OF ALL. ABNER HAD THOUGHT HE MIGHT BE WHOLLY NORMAL FOR A WHILE, AND HAD RUN AWAY **BECAUSE** HE WAS NORMAL. BUT AS TIME PASSED...

THE SNOW IS **DEEPER** NOW AND ABNER LEAVES A CLEAR TRAIL AS HE ENTERS THE WOODS. THE LINE OF PRINTS IS SHARP AS THE MOON SILVERS THE TREES. THE RIGHT FOOT HAS LEFT THE CLEAN IMPRINT OF A MAN'S BOOTED FOOT. **THE OTHER...?**
THE OLD WHITLOCK MANSION LOOMS LARGE NOW, A GIBBOUS MOON BLOATING BEHIND IT AND LENDING THE CROWDING OAKS THE ASPECT OF BENT, LEERING MONSTERS.
ABNER BRUSHES ASIDE CLINGING CREEPERS AND CLIMBS THE SNOW-SLIMED STEPS TO THE MASSIVE DOOR. HE REACHES OUT A HAND TO KNOCK... BUT THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN **OF ITS OWN ACCORD!**

THIS FEATURE FIRST APPEARED IN "DAGON" Nb. 15. REPRODUCED COURTESY OF CARL FORD ©1987.


WITHIN, HE MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH DIM AND COBWEBBY CORRIDORS TOWARD EZEKIEL'S OLD, HUGE ROOM. CANDLES, STRATEGICALLY PLACED, LIGHT HIS WAY.
THEN—
HE PAUSES BEFORE A DOOR WHICH STANDS **AJAR**, HESITATES BEFORE CONTINUING. FOR THIS WAS THE ROOM WHERE THEY HAD LOCKED SARAH WHEN SHE WAS SIX. HAD SHE PASSED ON THEN?
ABNER GROWS ANGRY AT THE THOUGHT.
HE SNARLS AND HIS JAWS OPEN, OPEN, OPEN—**IMPOSSIBLY!** BUT NO, HE MUST **CONTROL** HIMSELF—AT LEAST UNTIL HE STANDS FACE TO FACE WITH EZEKIEL...
AND AT LAST HE ARRIVES AT THE DOOR TO THE OLD MAN'S ROOM. PUSHES IT OPEN, ENTERS.
EZEKIEL SITS THERE, AS HE ALWAYS SAT, EXCEPT HE IS VERY, VERY OLD NOW. HIS RHEUMY EYES OPEN INTO SLITS AND SEE ABNER STANDING THERE. THEY OPEN **WIDER**, FROM MERE SLITS TO FERAL YELLOW GAPS IN HIS WRINKLED LEATHER FACE.
ON THE ARM OF HIS CHAIR HIS HAND—THE ONE WITH THE WORMS—LIES FLACID AND LIFELESS. THE WORMS ARE THIN, STILL, EMPTY OF LIFE. LIKE OLD, SHUCKED OFF SNAKESKINS. THE OLD MAN'S POTENCY HAS GONE.
Martin Mckenna

SO YEW'VE COME BACK, EH, ABNER?
HE SNEERS, HIS VOICE A WHISPER.
WALL, DIN'T AH TELL YEW YEW WUD? SHUDDA PAID ME SOME MIND, BOY.
HIS VOICE IS THIN, REEDY, TIRED — LOATHSOME. ABNER'S HATE SWELLS WITHIN HIM.
HE MOVES HIS FOOT, HIS STRANGE FOOT, AND IT GRIPS THE WORM-EATEN CARPET IN A SUDDEN SPASM.
HE LEANS FORWARD AND REACHES FOR EZEKIEL'S SCRAWNY NECK, AND THE OLD MAN SPEAKS AGAIN:
COME BACK TO CLAIM THE WHITLOCK HERITAGE, EH? YEW SHUDDA STAYED, BOY. ALL THE OTHERS'RE GONE NOW. THE OLD 'UNS, ANYHAOW. YEW'D HA BIN THE BIG ONE RAOUN' THE HAOUSE, ABNER...
AT LAST ABNER ANSWERS AS HIS FINGERS TIGHTEN ABOUT THE OLD MAN'S NECK.
I STILL WILL BE THE BIG ONE - WHEN YOU'RE GONE!
NO, NO —
EZEKIEL CHOKES OUT THE WORDS.
TOO LATE, ABNER. YEW'RE... TOO... LATE!

AS THE OLD MAN'S HEAD LOLLS TO ONE SIDE, HIS GLAZED EYES BULGING, ABNER HEARS A SOUND BEHIND HIM. HIS JAWS EXPAND ENORMOUSLY AS HE WHIRLS — AND FREEZES!
AGAIN OLD EZEKIEL WAS RIGHT. HE IS TOO LATE. SOMEONE ELSE HAS CLAIMED THE WHITLOCK HERITAGE. SOMEONE - SOMETHING! - WHO IS EVEN MORE DIFFERENT. WHOSE DIFFERENCES ARE REACHING TO ENGULF HIM EVEN NOW...
SOMETHING WITH SWEET LITTLE SARAH'S FACE —
- ALMOST!
END

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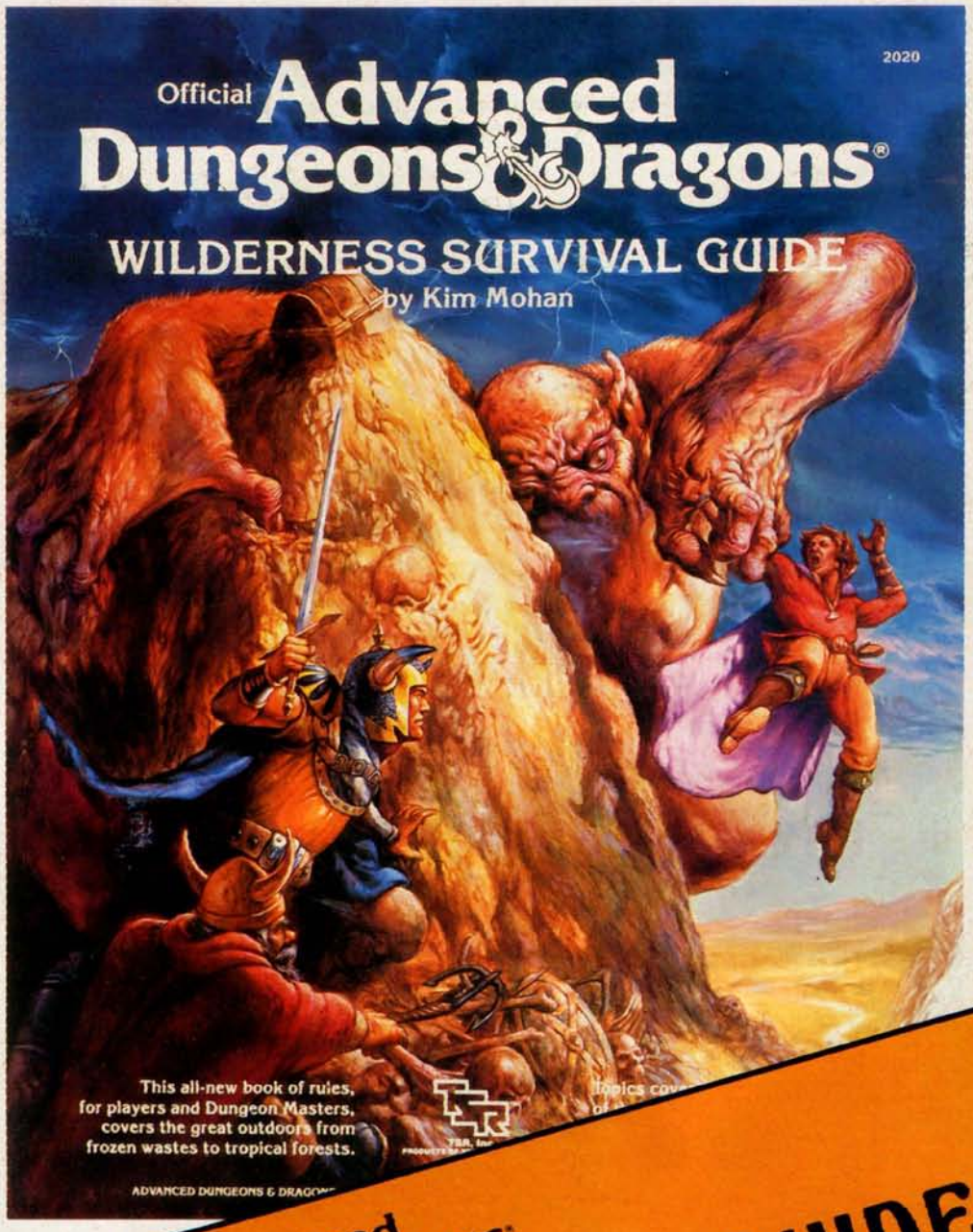
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